

MAURICE DEKOBRA

WE have the privilege of introducing to English readers Maurice Dekobra, one of the world's best sellers, who until recently had been almost ignored in these islands, although his translated works have been published in as many as twenty-three languages, including Turkish, Bulgarian, Esthonian, Japanese and Persian. As many as 3,500,000 volumes by this extraordinary man have been sold in Europe alone.

Wherever one travels on the Continent, every bookstall and bookseller's window regorges with Dekobra; most of the theatres and cinemas are producing something by Dekobra; at Vienna and Budapest and Madrid we find him lecturing to packed houses; it is impossible to open a newspaper without short stories by Dekobra—epigrams by Dekobra. Even in prudish England they contrived to boost him by banning his novel, *The Phantom Gondola*. The British have not been slow to appreciate Monsieur Dekobra, and his books have gone through many editions here.

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VENUS ON WHEELS

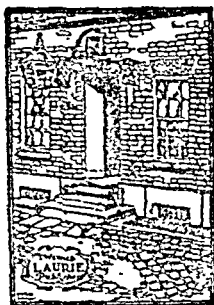
VENUS ON WHEELS

by

MAURICE DEKOBRA

Author of "The Madonna of the Sleeping Cars"

Translated from
La Venus à Roulettes
by Metcalfe Wood



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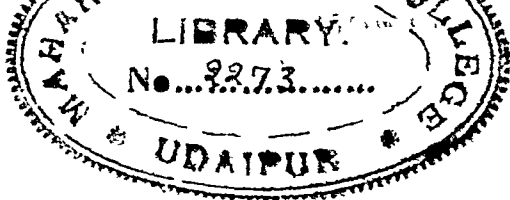
The Bytander— 'I have just read *The Chronicles of a Gigolo* with unalloyed enjoyment. It is mighty well done. In parts it is genuinely moving in others hilariously funny. It is singularly piquant, and should have a big success.

First English translation 1930

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

I DO not know whether I owe my love of travel to the fact that I just missed being born in the waiting-room of the *gare de l'Est* in Paris. Anyway, it seems to me that the man of to-day should have two establishments. One, the official one, where his income tax demand notes are sent to. The other, a semi-official one, on wheels, called a sleeping-car. . . . Long live those European trains in which a wireless telephone has not yet been installed.

Henri Bergson, the champion Futurist philosopher, agrees with me; for his theory is that we move on greased wheels, while Baudelaire, on the other hand, loathed "any movement which upset lines." . . . He was quite right—when he wanted to compose verse; but he was quite wrong when he did not appreciate the movement which stirs up an author's mind.

Amongst our contemporaries there are the seagulls and the snails. The point of view of the seagull-men is airy, wide and liberal; tinged with good-natured cynicism, so common to the human race. The intellect of the snail-men is narrow and limited in its horizon.

The seagulls are easy to get on with, no matter whether they be English, Italian or Scandinavians. The snails—well, you can't probe their mentality. Give them a new idea and they have a fit. If all the seagull-men could spread their wings above Locarno chauvinism would vanish, like a disease from which the microbe has been eradicated; and there would be no more disagreements between nations.

There are only four great capitals in the world: New York, London, Berlin and Paris. All the rest are villages. True these villages are sometimes quite charming and are

often rich in art treasures. But all the same they are merely villages, where everyone knows one another, where a man cannot deceive his wife without being immediately found out and marked down.

These four great cities constitute the lovers' paradise. About 1910 I met in Charlottenburg a French violinist who was consoling a charming Berlin lady. She was married to a banker. For a long time the husband remained in ignorance. A life adventure in Rome, Madrid or Budapest would have been found out in three weeks and would have had as an epilogue two swords or a couple of pistol shots. But one must remember that between the Spittelmarkt and the Kurfürstendamm there are two million inhabitants!

A philosopher once said: 'The world is a great book, and one has merely read the first page when one has only lived in one's native town.' I would add: when one has only loved women of one nation.

How many times on board a ship or in some palatial tea room, have I been asked:

"In your opinion what race of women know best how to make love?"

My answer is:

"To begin with, you are making a mistake in looking upon me as an authority. You should have put that question to Don Juan who sleeps his last sleep in a monastery in Seville. He would be qualified to speak. The man who ordered from Valdès Leal the celebrated picture in which a prince and a prelate lie in their coffins and are already eaten by worms, that fellow, after his thousand and one adventures, could certainly have given you the information. I am only a modest traveller who has tried to take note of the doings of the two sexes. I beg to be excused."

When people have pressed me I have said:

"Let me give you the opinion of a Scotsman on love. He always spoke of his lady friends as Mimi Vodka, Mimi-Pilsen, Mimi-Chianti, Mimi Whisky or Mimi Punch, according to whether he was having an affair with a

Russian, a German, an Italian, an Englishwoman or a Swede. . . . This Scotsman totted up women by their favourite drinks."

I shall always remember what a handsome American lady from New Orleans, who was receiving her friends one day in her swimming-pool, told me in confidence between two dives. I can see her now, almost naked, with her close-fitting bathing-costume clinging to her Juno-like figure as she came out of the water. We were sitting on the edge of the pool. She held a cigarette between her wet fingers. I had asked her :

"In America, when a woman wants to get rid of a man whose attentions have become too assiduous, what does she do? "

And the naiad replied :

"She marries him."

Not long ago, at the Lido, there was a very alluring Polish lady, who was searching for the unattainable, that is to say, for the ideal lover. One day she thought she had met this *rara avis*. . . . She unburdened herself to him as follows :

"My dear, you attract me immensely. I really believe I could willingly give myself to you; but only on condition that within a week from to-day you have done something out of the ordinary which will excite the admiration of a woman. . . ."

The gallant gentleman, who was enraptured though somewhat perturbed, set about his task. He challenged a wretched little Government official, on his holiday, to a duel, because he had accidentally sat upon the lady's cigarettes. He plunged into the water of the Grand Canal to fish out the powder-puff that she had dropped from her motor-scarf. He mystified everybody in Venice by depositing horse manure in the middle of the Piazza Marco. Each day he thought out a fresh exploit. And each time the Polish lady shook her head with a disdainful smile.

6 PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

The eighth evening, distressed and discouraged, he begged the inflexible damsel to put an end to his torture. She surveyed him with an ironical expression.

But my dear you have done absolutely nothing extraordinary! This is all child's play the puerile efforts of a lover lacking in imagination."

Wanda! Wanda! What did you want me to do?"

"I will tell you. As I have given you so many opportunities of coming into my *alcôve* you could have seduced my *jeune de chambre* who is by no means ugly.

Then I should have known that you had no greater regard for me than that! I should have been extremely piqued and that very evening I should have fallen into your arms! You know nothing of the feminine heart, my friend. Otherwise you would have understood that when once a woman has got a man in hand she has got him no longer in her heart.

In writing *Levens on Wheels* I have not attempted to devote these pages particularly to the study of the feminine temperament that unfathomable abyss! But I have amused myself by taking note of the reaction on the mind of an honest woman who is by chance, thrown into close contact with one of those poor little courtesans to whom life is not a dream but a sorrowful reality.

When an author says that he is amused by the reader is apt to show signs of nervousness and inquires

"It amuses him to write it, but will it amuse me to read it?"

A writer who amuses himself and at the same time bores fifty thousand people is in a very *unenviable* position for a celebrated humorist once said

"A novelist may do what he likes so long as he does not send his readers to sleep!"

I shall feel happy if *Levens on Wheels* is not used by surgeons as a substitute for chloroform when they operate upon their patients.

I

THE Cassis Bar is not frequented by the high priests of Virtue who live in the XVIIIth *arrondissement*. In the first place Père Cassis, who opens it from ten o'clock in the evening till four o'clock in the morning, does not happen to be the possessor of a Montyon prize. And in the second place the corner of the rue Lepic and the rue Girardon attracts neither moralists, nor saints, nor frock-coated knights with their floss-silk gloves.

A striking figure this Père Cassis. Fifty years old. A paunch like a Buddha, an optimist with ogee-shaped shoulders under his white piqué coat, which is bountifully bespattered with liqueur stains.

Some people are of opinion that he is not a bad sort of fellow, and, as easily as not, he might have ended his days in the shoes of a sacristan. But others swear that he carries upon his epigastrium, in the shape of various trinkets, evidences of his peccadilloes which he does not expiate because the myrmidons of

the Law have enrolled him as an informer. However, be that as it may, Père Cassis presides with authority over the destinies of his little bar, and knows how to chuck out with a firm hand—drunkards, schoolboys who have broken out of their dormitories, courtesans saturated with cocaine and light fingered gentry on the look out for tempting bits of jewellery.

It is moreover quite picturesque, this Cassis Bar and no noisy publicity vaunts its nocturnal delights. Half a score of tables, not more in front of *banquettes* upholstered in red velvet are surmounted by allegorical frescoes painted by a Cubist who must have been suffering from a whitlow on the end of his first finger. On the right, Luxury, furnished with tetrahedral bosoms, plays leap frog with Pleasure—a gnome who is bending down. On the left a wretched looking figure representing Voluptuousness is making an enticing gesture to Continence, clothed in packing canvas and ‘coiffed’ in a helmet of prune coloured silk. In the background Jealousy, with a daffodil yellow brow, very knitted, sheds tears of blood into a blue polyhedral bowl of elaborate design.

This particular evening—it was eleven o’clock—Père Cassis was mixing a gin fizz for

the sole customer who had ventured into his den, an uncommunicative Englishman whose angular face looked as though it had been hewn out of beechwood. On either side of him were two girls who were doing their best to cheer him up. Every now and then the guitarist squatted near the bar, between the buffet and the toilet-room door, like a troglodyte in his cave; he was olive coloured and pock-marked, and twanged either a Hawäian waltz or *the blues* already out of date.

The solemn islander, in his black evening coat and white tie, did not speak. Fernande, sitting on his right, was blowing through straws in order to shoot paper pellets up to the ceiling. Lily, seated on his left, tapped, in an aimless sort of way, her neighbour's neck as she nibbled some salted almonds.

Fernande's hair was as auburn as an unripe chestnut. Her little nose, fit for a marchioness, seemed to keep happy company with her large merry-peasant sort of mouth. Lily, with jet black hair and a very pale face, looked like a piece of anthracite in a glass of sherbet. The two of them synthesized the type of those little courtesans who are so devoted to La Butte —love-birds that perch two by two in the gilded aviary of rapid and sophisticated kisses.

Both together they got up and began to dance with the praiseworthy idea of distracting the Englishman

'Pepito!' Lily called out, "play us a fox trot"

The dreamy guitarist roused himself from visions of home in the distant sierras and obeyed

Fernande and Lily threaded their way between the tables, while Pere Cassis, behind the mahogany parapet of his bar, cut yellow latitudes on the globe of a large lemon

"Don't you think one would be better selling water cress in the market than leading this sort of life?" Fernande murmured into Lily's ear

But the conscientious Lily continued to trill in English

"Hello! my little girlie—hello——"

"That's all right—if you think he can understand—your Englishman!"

"My Englishman! Why not say our Englishman I'll hand him over to you this evening, if you like"

"You mean it, you're not joking, you'll lend him to me to night? That'll just settle my rent"

"Why, of course, old girl Pass me the rhubarb and I'll pass you the senna"

"Look out," whispered Lily, "he is listening."

And mechanically she began again, in English:

"Hello! my little girlie—hello! . . ."

Père Cassis had by this time finished making his gin fizz. He went up to the table:

"Your gin, Monsieur."

"Thanks," muttered the Englishman.

"And here are the straws."

"Thanks."

"Water, Monsieur?"

"Never on your life."

And the Englishman slipped a little lower into the space between the table and the *banquette*.

In the meantime Fernande asked Lily:

"Where did you pick him up?"

"In the lift at the Printemps. He was looking for the haberdashery department. So I showed him my stockings. Oh, hang it! Now he's asleep!"

"It's a lot of good fagging ourselves out dancing!"

Fernande and Lily stopped in front of the mirror to powder their noses. The latter continued:

"If you want to be a success to-night, make

a fuss of him. He is chock full of sentiment.

I know him. If you talk to him about the late Queen — he bursts into tears. I'm going to tell him how wonderful you are. You just leave it to me. You've got to excite his curiosity."

She went over to his table, sat beside him and put her arm round his neck.

"Harry! just listen, I've something to tell you. My little friend Fernande here is no ordinary girl, you know."

She leant over to Fernande and whispered: "Tell him something funny."

Then Fernande put on her best society manner, smiled and said

"You are English, I think, Monsieur?"

The night bird emitted a grunt in the affirmative, and became absorbed in the silent contemplation of the bubbles rising in his gin fizz.

"Harry," Lily continued with persistence, "just listen to this. Fernande is one of the celebrities of Montmartre. Her father was guillotined!"

Fernande gave a shrug of disapproval. Her little friend seemed to be overdoing it.

"Chut—leave it to me."

And leaning over the Englishman, she continued:

"Her papa—guillotined."

Lily's expressive gesture having aroused his interest, he repeated the word "guillotined" and seemed rather perplexed.

Lily explained:

"Yes . . . he has been cut—Couic!"

"Oh . . . eunuch? . . . Mademoiselle's father was a eunuch in a harem?"

"Eunuch?—why, no . . . he was a celebrated bandit. He was condemned to death in 1921."

"Ah . . . jolly good."

The Englishman gradually woke up. He turned to Fernande and asked her:

"You saw . . . your father . . . cut?"

"Cut what?"

Lily interposed:

"Have his head cut off. No—she missed the execution. She engaged a room opposite the Santé, but the waiter forgot to call her in the morning."

The Englishman appeared to understand. His stolid countenance became animated.

"Oh!—very funny—damned funny!"

"She is nice, hein, my little friend Lily?"

"Oh, awfully damned funny—Guil-lo-ti-ned—Couic!"

"Well, now, you two flirt a bit."

And pleased at having given the true bearings (according to the Chart of Love) to

the faltering feet of the British subject, Lily lit a cigarette, got up and went to the bar where Père Cassis was building biscuits into a tower of Pisa on the counter

Fernande, in the meantime, made great play with her charms. Her leg rubbed against his, her delicate shoulder touching his muscular one, with her eyes half closed she purred like a cat as it stretches itself and digs its claws into a velvet cushion

"I am full of nerves to night, my darling."

"Humph "

"My nerves are excited And you, my dear?"

The Englishman, solid as Nelson on his column, answered politely

"And mine are too"

"Say something nice to me!"

"I feel sick"

"Oh! darling"

And with great appropriateness Fernande hummed

*"My heart was yours and yours was mine,
When first I saw your eyes divine"*

Lily, perched on a high stool, kept her eye on her friend. Putting her hand in front of her mouth like a trumpet, she asked:

"How are you getting on?"

"Just my luck—he's ill."

"Don't worry, old girl—when he's sick he throws up everything, even his money."

Fernande knew, however, by experience, that success in love, like success in life, requires great patience, and that Eros has no use for those who are disheartened too quickly.

"Darling," she continued, "I feel sure I'm going to love you quite a lot."

But the Englishman, stolid and unmoved, replied :

"Yes, I dare say—but all the same, I feel sick !"

Pauloche had just come into the Cassis Bar. Another bird in the cage of Cheap-Jack joys. Pretty? Yes and no. A Gavarni retouched by Steinlen. Her dark, thick hair cut in a fringe, à la Titus; its black frame contrasted against the dead white of her forehead like the ebony case of a piano against the ivory keyboard. Her green eyes were slightly aslant and too heavily made-up. Her mouth tempting, but over-rouged. In short, a little *grue*. . . . But not one of the standard type whose organs are obviously adapted to their function, and who dispenses sensual pleasure like a Chicago pork-packing machine. She wore neither pearls nor rings of great price. Her

dress seemed slightly shabby . . . It was evident that the revenue from this charming body was a little below par, and that a cautious capitalist would not have been tempted to invest

"Cassis!" she called out as she shut the door, "a hundred sous for my taxi, and put it on the slate"

Pere Cassis opened his cash drawer and took out a note

'Good evening my dear There's your chit"

Pauloche went out, paid her taxi, and came in again grumbling

"The chauffeur isn't satisfied Fifteen sous tip, and he swears at me If I could earn five francs as quickly as he does with his old merry go round I shouldn't grouse about the high cost of living"

"What's the matter, Pauloche? You seem fed up?"

"I am, my boy, right up to the neck Just think of it, the day before yesterday I picked up an American on the terrace at Fouquet's Bar After dinner, he caught sight of Tiny Loulou, she pinched him in two ticks and took him off to supper I met her just now, and she said that she's refused fifty louis because she'd got a crush on him What

will she do next, I wonder! Sleeping with an American for nothing these days!"

"That won't improve the value of the franc," Père Cassis remarked shrewdly.

"You know—what gets my goat isn't so much that she sneaked him from me—but she's fallen for him. Think of it! An American—for nothing! with the dollar at more than twenty francs! . . ."

"What'll you have, Pauloche?"

"A small marc, no frills—to drown my sorrows."

"What are *you* doing with worries, Pauloche?"

"What are you talking about—just look at the price of meat, and men don't seem to want to make love nowadays."

"How long have you been at the game?"

"I came from decent people, I did. Five years. I wasn't brought up in the business. I began when I was sixteen, on the night of the fourteenth of July."

There was a silence. Lily went over to Fernande to give her a hand in breaking down the stubborn apathy of the Englishman. The guitarist began cleaning his nails with a toothpick that he had picked up under the table. One could hear the grunting of a motor outside as it went up the rue Lepic.

Pauloche suddenly seemed to recall the first chapter of her dissolute reminiscences Pere Cassis, as he polished his shaker with a chamois leather, shook his head and added

"Funny idea—the fourteenth of July——"

Pauloche made an evasive gesture with her dainty little hand bedecked with false rubies in an ebony ring

"What do you think? The idea tickled me to death I swore that I'd fall on the night of the taking of the Bastille"

"I hope, at least, you fell into the arms of a good republican?"

"You've hit it! He was a police sergeant!"

And Pauloche added, as she sniffed some roasted coffee beans in a white metal tray

"Father wanted me to be a cook—so I fell into the soup—same thing"

Pere Cassis looked at himself in his shaker, then he remarked

"All the same, you're an amusing bit of goods Sometimes I've seen you brooding for hours in your corner You haven't got anything on your mind, have you?"

Pauloche did not answer

"You ought to take things philosophically, Pauloche"

"Yes, Cassis . . . like a tame cow. . . . You'll have another small marc?"

Père Cassis drew a bottle, hitched his trousers with a twist of his hips, and added:

"Well, there's your pal Lily, she'll buck you up."

Lily and Pauloche were united by bonds of friendship which were free from jealousy. They both lived in the rue Duperré on the fifth floor looking into the courtyard, in furnished rooms kept by the widow of a government official who had been sentenced to five years' imprisonment for falsifying his accounts. Pauloche had two small rooms. Lily only one. But Pauloche's powder-puff sometimes strayed on to Lily's dressing-table, and Lily, who was less chilly, often lent her eiderdown to Pauloche; an eiderdown of periwinkle satin covered with coffee stains, red lip-stick smudges, violet ink spots and greasy finger-marks.

"Good evening, Pauloche—all right?"

"Good evening, Lily—yes, fair."

They leaned their elbows on the bar. Lily pointed to the Englishman, and said:

"Do you know what he has just said to Fernande—that Englishman?"

"No."

"He said that here it is just like a hen-run.

The birds are on the *banquettes* and the eggs are hard boiled on the tables Funny type, these English, ain't they, Pauloche?"

"Yes, Lily Take care"

"You've had some, eh?"

"Yes"

"You like them?"

"They feed me up"

Cassis put his finger to his lips and cut in with

"Hush—don't frighten away good customers"

"My boy," replied Pauloche, "I shall say what I like Good customers! I don't think! Hypocrites and tricksters—I had one last month He switched off the electric light when he was dressing himself"

"He was so modest?"

"No So anxious to get away without paying"

A smart car driven by a chauffeur with a white pique cap cover had just pulled up in front of the Cassis Bar Two ladies got out, looked carefully at the sign of the establishment, spoke to one another in undertone, and after a little hesitation pushed open the glass swing door, curtained with yellow silk

The younger one, smartly dressed, was

wearing a very handsome necklace. Her tiny feet were shod in silver brocade shoes, and a diamond bracelet sheathed her dainty wrist. A woman of the world. Without a doubt. Her natural and stately bearing, her dignified and reserved manner, her face innocent of any make-up prevented one from associating her with the habitués of this night-haunt. Her presence in Monsieur Cassis's bar would have seemed abnormal if she had not been accompanied by a middle-aged woman dressed in black satin, who put one more in mind of the plane trees of a provincial town than of the chestnut trees of the Boulevard de Clichy. This lady, very simply attired, was wearing pince-nez which added to the severity of her appearance. She seemed ill at ease. On the threshold of the bar, she hesitated and said:

"Denise—do you really mean to do it?"

The younger lady, in a very determined manner, answered:

"Why certainly, Mother. Besides, our friend, Méridien, is expecting us. Let's go in."

The guitarist, as he yawned, was playing a Spanish waltz when the mother and her daughter penetrated into the bar. Père Cassis hastened to find them a table, with all the natural business instinct of a crafty old cabaret

proprietor He summed them up as two good class provincials, two ladies in search of something out of the ordinary He fussed round them, found them seats, and put the wine card on the table

Meanwhile the mother and daughter talked to one another in low voices

"Méridden ought to be here at eleven o'clock sharp "

"He evidently hasn't arrived yet "

"That's tiresome What a curious little café! "

"It isn't a café, Mamma, it's a bar of ill-fame "

"Aren't you ashamed to bring me here? "

"It was you who wished to come "

"A respectable woman cannot possibly go into places like these without her mother "

They went on whispering Lily and Pauloche leaning up against the bar kept glancing at them and quizzing them critically The lady in black, so respectable in appearance, with an old fashioned bracelet over a white kid glove, who had evidently escaped from a church wardens' pew in some old-world cathedral, excited their suppressed hilarity

"You know those birds? " Lily asked Père
Cassis

"No," said he, "never seen them before."

Pauloche turned, her hand on her hip, and surveyed them superciliously.

"The old girl is the godmother."

"The other one calls her 'Mamma.' It's her mother," hazarded Lily.

"I don't think. . . . Mothers like that are going thirteen to the dozen in the flea market."

"They work together, maybe. . . . Wait a minute . . . I'll go and pump 'em."

Lily went towards the newcomers and with a pleasant smile strolled between their table and that of the Englishman. A little farther on she stopped and powdered herself before the tiny mirror from her hand-bag, went a little closer and deliberately smiled at the middle-aged lady who bent over to her daughter and whispered:

"Denise—that girl is staring at us—I'm nervous. . . ."

"Don't be childish, Mamma. She won't eat us."

Lily, to break the ice, picked up an almond from the table, and graciously and very affably inquired:

"How's business?"

"What do you say?" murmured the lady in black.

But Lily went on:

"We don't often see you around these parts"

Denise replied courteously.

"No, Mademoiselle"

Then she added

"Mamma—we must order something whilst we are waiting for Meridien"

"Do you think we ought?"

"Yes *Garçon!*"

Then Lily, somewhat disappointed, went back to the bar and confided to Pauloche:

"They are not very chatty"

Monsieur Cassis, when he had taken their order, disappeared into the cellar. He came back with a bottle of dry champagne and a small flask of liqueur. He remarked playfully

"There you are, ladies, mother's milk and a drop of dill water!"

"Tell us, *garçon*, do you happen to know Monsieur Meridien by chance?" inquired Denise, who seemed to be getting more acclimatized in the atmosphere of the bar.

"Monsieur Méridien? Why, certainly very well indeed. He's quite a good customer"

"We have an appointment with him here at eleven o'clock—it is annoying, he has not turned up yet"

"Bah! he is sure to come, ladies, if he promised he would."

"It is particularly annoying, because he arranged to introduce me to the proprietor of the bar—Monsieur Cassis."

"Monsieur Cassis? That's me, Madame."

"Ah! you are he? . . ."

"The Buddha" in his white jacket now grew interested in the turn of the conversation. He bowed graciously, his hands resting on the edge of the table.

"Yes, certainly, Madame—and what can I do for you, Madame?"

Denise turned to her mother and said:

"Don't you think, Mamma, that we may as well tell Monsieur Cassis all about it?"

"Of course, yes."

"Listen, Monsieur Cassis. . . ."

The Buddha, getting still more interested, took a chair.

"If you will allow me, Mesdames?"

"Please do. Monsieur Cassis, our mutual friend, Monsieur Méridien, tells me that you are a man—how shall I put it—a man who is in the run of things—that is the expression, I think?"

"Oh! yes, Madame, I'm in the running—like an over-ripe camembert—as you might

say If you are friends of Monsieur Merdien, I am entirely at your service ”

‘ It is this, Monsieur Cassis I cannot give you all the details, but the fact of the matter is that I have a craving for philanthropy ”

The Buddha raised his eyebrows in astonishment and played the devil's tattoo with the little pink sausages that were attached to his fat palm

‘ A craving for philanthropy? ” he repeated

Yes Monsieur It is not, perhaps, very usual at my age—however, that is my hobby I want to uplift the world and reclaim the derelicts of life In a word, Monsieur Cassis I want to save a lost soul—a woman ”

“ What ! ’

The astonishment of Monsieur Cassis visibly increased He gazed at the fair young lady, flabbergasted a lady who most assuredly was not thirty and yet spoke of philanthropy at a time of life when the love of one's neighbour generally has a brass bedstead for its frame and the wall paper of an hotel bedroom for its horizon

His amazement was so obvious that Denise faltered in her choice of words She dropped her eyes, played mechanically with the paper fan that she found on the table, and continued in a more earnest tone

"To be precise, Monsieur Cassis, I am anxious to rescue an unfortunate who has fallen into the gutter—to uplift her. . . ."

"To uplift her? After that what are you going to do?"

"Guide her feet into the paths of virtue."

Père Cassis was obviously nonplussed. He replied:

"I see—that is very unusual. Here, Madame, folks don't generally come to lift women up—but rather to pick them up."

"Quite so, but you follow my idea, don't you?"

"Oh, yes. You want, as you might say, to fish for a drifting shrimp?"

Denise's mother, who had been listening attentively to this conversation, asked eagerly:

"What does he say?"

But Denise did not think it was necessary to translate into pure French the barman's esoteric language.

"Don't worry to understand, Mamma," she said, and added: "You have grasped my meaning, Monsieur Cassis. . . ."

He put it in a nut-shell:

"You want her to give up the business?"

"What do you mean by that, the business?"

"Why—her business—the business of love. . . ."

At that point Denise thought it wise to warn him that chaste ears were listening to *their* conversation. So, then and there, she said:

"Monsieur Cassis—let me present you to my mother."

"A thousand pardons, Madame——"

The Buddha bowed towards the lady with the glasses, and in order to show his affability in the matter, took it upon himself to elucidate his incomprehensible jargon.

"What I mean, Madame, by the 'business,' is that when a woman of easy virtue slips between the sheets with a——"

But Denise interrupted him hurriedly:

"You need not explain, Monsieur Cassis. We understand quite well. I have already explained my idea to Monsieur Méridien, and he said 'Meet me to night at the Cassis Bar and we shall be sure to find a slipper to fit your foot, or rather a little bird who will allow herself to be picked up, or perhaps I should say—uplifted.' What do you think about it, Monsieur Cassis?"

"Upon my word, Madame—that remains to be seen——"

"Do you happen to know, amongst your clients, a fallen girl who is really worth rescuing?"

The persistence of Denise made Monsieur

Cassis treat the affair more seriously, and he began to try and get at the truth.

"First of all may I ask you one question, Madame? Your proposal, is it perfectly honest—really honest?"

"Oh, Monsieur——"

"I say that because, in my experience, I once came across a man dressed as a clergyman, who made out that he was very anxious to redeem lost girls——"

"And he did so?"

"Yes, he did so by redeeming their jewellery for a mere song; he was an old Jew from the Faubourg du Temple, called Mullwitz; at present he is paying the penalty by doing six months in Fresnes jail."

Denise blushed, overcome with confusion.

"You need have no fears of that sort in my case, Monsieur Cassis. Let me see, could you give me some hints as to the circumstances of your clients?"

"With pleasure, Madame. In that case we shall be able to talk more freely in the little room where there are no indiscreet ears."

Denise got up to go. She said without delay:

"I am ready, Monsieur Cassis. Mamma, I shall only be a minute or two."

"Be as quick as you can."

"We shan't be long"

And whilst the guitarist was tuning his instrument, the fair young lady and the protuberant Buddha disappeared behind the glass door

Lily and Fernande, heedless of the unusual conversation that was taking place at the neighbouring table, continued to make a dead set at their Englishman. He must have been very hard hearted, this Englishman, not to reward perseverance which deserved success. Fernande complained

"Just my luck! For once in your life you hand me over one of your boys, and he's squiffy"

Lily suggested a remedy

"Do you think a little *eau de melisse* would be any good?"

"Some hopes. About as much good as putting a poultice on a fat head"

"I know—I'll read the cards!"

"Think that's any good?"

Lily got a pack from Pere Cassis's drawer, and informed the Englishman that she was going to tell him his fortune. She checked the pack with the air of a conjuror and flicked out one of the cards with her thumb, and told the Englishman to take up a card

"What have you taken? . . . The ace of spades?"

The Englishman was very obstinate. He remarked to Fernande:

"There, you see—the ace of spades. I knew my luck was out. I feel sick."

Lily put out the cards:

"Look—the Queen—somebody loves you—the King of Diamonds—now for yourself—the seven of diamonds—shows you are handsome. . . ."

"Ha! ha!—the seven of diamonds—that's you!" ejaculated Fernande.

But the Englishman was as unmoved as a milestone and protested:

"I'm not handsome—I'm sick."

"I am going to see what this woman who loves you is like," continued Lily. "The eight of spades—that's funny. Look, the lady who loves you is not far away—I turn up the King. Put your finger on it."

"On what?"

"Upon this card. There—the nine of clubs. Her name begins with F."

Fernande clapped her hands as she listened to the oracle:

"With an F. . . . Fernande! That's me! That's me, my darling. There can't be any doubt about it, can there?"

Thereupon she threw her arms round the Englishman's neck. He pushed her away, gently

"What do you think of that?" said Lily jubilantly

"Nothing "

Fernande seemed depressed. She inquired

"Are you superstitious?"

"No—I'm bilious "

After that Lily admitted that she was beaten. She tossed the cards into a fruit basket and said

"He's drunk. You take him on "

For the last few minutes, however, the Englishman had no longer been interested in the mysteries of his future as revealed by the King and Queen. His attention had been riveted on Denise's mother at the farther end of the velvet *banquette*. He scrutinized attentively the discreet and respectable middle-aged lady with her little glass of anisette. Suddenly, as though he had just collected his scattered thoughts, he banged the table with his fist and called out

"Well—I'm damned! ",

Fernande jumped up and asked him with alarm

"What is the matter, darling? Can I help you?"

"By Jove! . . . I know that lady."

"What do you say, my dear?"

"I say: I know that lady—she comes from London. . . ."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Quite! It's the Duchess of Waterland; she used to be my poor old dad's mistress before King Edward came to the throne."

He got up. Mechanically he adjusted his white tie and shot his shirt cuff.

Fernande was amazed, and wondered what he was going to do. The Englishman stopped short and said:

"I'm going to pay my respects to the Duchess—keep out of my way. . . . Don't speak to me. . . . Leave me alone."

Then with a wobbly but worthy gait he went up to the table where Denise's mother was growing more and more fidgety because Monsieur Méridien was so late. When he reached the azimuth of the glass of anisette, he pulled himself smartly together, bowed, smiled and said:

"The Duchess of Waterland, if I am not mistaken? . . . I am delighted to meet your Grace here——"

Denise's mother showed signs of alarm. It

was obvious she was not in the habit of talking to strangers after sundown. The Englishman, however, persisted.

' You remember me, don't you? Arthur
Gordon Shark—of the Bath Club "

The silence of the lady in black satin some what damped him. But, as everybody knows, the British possess the patience of a fisherman and the obstinacy of a bull dog.

Oh, my dear Duchess!" continued the man in dress clothes, "you only understand French when you are in Montmartre. I am delighted to meet you—I have so often seen your photograph by my poor old dad's bed side."

Monsieur!"

The Englishman was at this moment trying to maintain his wobbling equilibrium by propping himself up against the table. Like a plant swaying in the wind, he oscillated backwards and forwards, and talked like a man who was glad to recall memories of his already long past youth.

"Ah, Duchess! How could I ever forget you! One evening my dear old dad got back to his club with your chemise tied round his neck. "

At that moment Denise's mother protested, and appealed pitifully to Fernande.

"Oh, really, this man is drunk! Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle!"

Fernande got up. She realized that her friend had made a mistake.

"Madame—please excuse him," she said. "He has been drinking gin fizzes since nine o'clock."

And, catching hold of the discomfited Englishman's arm, she added:

"Look here, my dear—come along. . . . It isn't the lady you think it is. . . ."

He persisted, however:

"You aren't really—hic—the Duchess of Waterland?"

"No, I am not, Monsieur. Please leave me."

"So then it wasn't you on the table by my dear old dad's bedside?"

"Certainly not, Monsieur. No—I have never been by your father's bedside—please go away and leave me alone."

"Oh! I am sorry—I am very upset. So sorry!—so sorry! I'm a gentleman, Madame. . . . My poor old dad was also a gentleman. . . . My uncle, Lord Windmill, and my cousin, Sir Reginald Westburn, are both gentlemen too. . . ."

"Just so, my dear Monsieur—that will do! . . . Go along with your little *amie*."

The mistake demanded an apology. Fernande took it upon herself to offer it to the offended party

"Ah, Madame," she explained very delicately, "it is tiresome with these young fellows who drink I bet you know a thing or two"

And smiling with the air of one who knows, she added

"You work the Monico, don't you?"

It was too much! Denise's mother could no longer restrain her indignation

"I, Mademoiselle! I work the Monico? Oh!!!"

But Fernande did not hear her She was with difficulty guiding the Englishman's faltering steps towards his table and trying to console him, whilst he kept on repeating in a jerky voice which fitted his crime

"Really—I'm a damned ass! It wasn't the Duchess of Waterland Really—I'm a blithering idiot——!"

Denise and Monsieur Cassis had just come back into the bar There was a contented look on the fair lady's face She could hardly listen to her mother's complaints regarding the free and easy manner of the "night bird" from

across the Channel. She drank a mouthful of champagne, examined the catch of her diamond bracelet and said with a satisfied air :

“Mamma, Monsieur Cassis has given me some valuable information. . . . Haven’t you, Monsieur Cassis?”

The Buddha readily agreed, and turning to the lady in black, he said :

“On my honour, as I have already explained to Madame, you can’t expect to catch fresh fish in the street-gutter, can you?”

“What do you say, Monsieur?”

“I was telling your daughter about two or three little bits who would very willingly take on the job. First of all, there is Mademoiselle Cora, a very nice young woman with extremely sensible ideas. Her mother brought her up at the Birds.”

“At the Convent of the Birds?”

“No—in the Bird Market by the river, near the Flower Stalls; she used to sell chickweed every Sunday. Unluckily she does not come here these days.”

“Where is she, then?”

“At St. Lazare prison.”

“Oh!”

Denise did not bother about her mother’s worried look. Her thoughts entirely absorbed by her philanthropic idea, she continued :

"Monsieur Cassis has also told me about a girl named Chipette"

"Oh, yes, Chipette," said the Buddha, agreeing with a smile "She would have been very suitable She is a very nice sort of girl She lives with a chap who works the pea and thimble"

"A tailor?"

"No no, at Auteuil and Longchamp races"

"What does he do at the races?" Denise's mother inquired

"He works the pea and thimble, and picks pockets"

"That's not a very nice thing to do"

'Oh no,' agreed Pere Cassis "She made a mistake to cotton on to a fellow like that But she's mad after him She's not a bad sort She works hard that girl, from dawn to dusk, and yet she finds time to come here till two in the morning"

Denise's mother wanted to know further particulars

"What? She works all the afternoon and carries on with men at night?"

"Why, yes"

And turning to Lily, Monsieur Cassis asked

"I say, Lily! What does Chipette do in the afternoon?"

Lily toyed with the jar of cherries soaked in brandy that she was trying to dig out with a pin. She replied :

"Chipette, she works the Chaussée-d'Antin."

Monsieur Cassis looked from Denise to her mother, satisfied at hearing his statement confirmed by an impartial witness. For the benefit of the lady in black satin he went through the possible candidates that might appeal to her daughter, and finished up in a confidential manner :

"Of course, it is not my business—but if I were in your place I should choose Pauloche."

"Which is Mademoiselle Pauloche?" asked Denise.

"That one there."

"And he discreetly pointed out Pauloche, who, standing up by the bar, was sprinkling a piece of burnt toast with cinnamon.

"She does not look very happy."

"Oh, well, you see, she isn't very happy."

"Poor girl!" murmured Denise.

"She's stony——"

Her mother did not understand.

"What?"

Monsieur Cassis put it more clearly. "She hasn't a bean."

"What do you say?"

Denise turned to her mother

"Monsieur Cassis means that she hasn't any money. Anyway, she seems to have a sympathetic nature, doesn't she, Mamma?"

"Oh! that's your affair, my child. As for me, I wash my hands of the whole business."

"Could you introduce me to her, Monsieur Cassis?"

"By all means—wait a moment." He hailed Pauloche. "Hi!"

Pauloche looked round

"What's the matter?"

"Will you take a glass of champagne with these ladies?"

"With whom?"

"With these ladies?"

Pauloche put her half nibbled piece of toast on the counter and came up to them apathetically. Cassis familiarly put his arm round her hips, and in a paternal sort of way said

"Come and let me introduce you, my love. Ladies, may I take the liberty of presenting to you the kid Pauloche, the pick of the whole basket, the best vintage in the cellar. Take my word for it, this is no thin wine, none of your little anæmic Suresnes—this is the Château Plumard of the great vintage the year of the Comet. Just bring it up from the cellar an hour before you drink it. Wine

Steward! A Pauloche. And let us have a Jeroboam—straight away!”

The genial banter of Père Cassis did not draw a smile from Pauloche who, this evening, seemed more tired than usual. She shrugged her shoulders.

“You bore me—I’ve got the hump. Good evening, everybody!”

Denise smiled at her pleasantly:

“Pray sit down, Mademoiselle. You’ll have a little champagne, won’t you?”

Pauloche took a chair between Denise and Monsieur Cassis. She murmured:

“Yes. I have got the rats, it may do me good!”

Monsieur Cassis poured some champagne into her glass and rose to go. He thought that now the ice was broken, it would be better to leave the ladies to talk quite freely.

Denise surveyed Pauloche sympathetically. Her mother scrutinized her through her pince-nez in a kindly manner. It was not the haughty, icy stare of a prude who takes the measure of a fallen woman, but the look of a naturalist who examines with interest some rare beetle. Denise filled Pauloche’s glass for the second time, and said:

“Come, Mademoiselle Pauloche—why do you look so sad?”

"Ah! Madame—I tell you I've got the blinking hump Here's the best!"

"May I ask the cause of your depression, Mademoiselle?"

Denise's mother had ventured this inquiry with the trepidation of a person who puts his hand in a panther's cage

"Bah!" growled Paulоче, "love is the cause of it"

"You are so unhappy?"

"For a row of pins I'd commit suicide"

"Oh! Try not to think about it"

"When you have a boil on the end of your finger don't you think about it? Well then, love, when you've got it badly, is like a boil on your heart. It must burst or you'll know the reason why"

Denise thoroughly appreciated Paulоче's comparison

"Yes, indeed, that's perfectly true!"

But her mother protested

"My dear child—that's a nice way to talk! Was Juliet, for example, a boil on Romeo's neck?"

"Where do you live, Mademoiselle Paulоче?" asked Denise

"Furnished rooms, rue Duperré"

"Your parents, are they alive?"

"No. I never had a mother. Papa found

me under a seat in the Parc Montsouris, and he has been dead for five years. He began life as a locksmith?"

"And finished as a man of means?"

"No. As a burglar."

"Oh! A burglar."

Denise's mother showed signs of alarm. Pauloche looked at her and added, smilingly:

"Why, yes. You can't choose your parents, can you?"

Denise showed sympathy.

"Poor Mademoiselle Pauloche—you said just now that you were disappointed in love?"

"Quite right. And I've got the hump."

"What's the reason?"

"Well, I'll tell you. One of my best pals next to Lily is Lanky Louise. Maybe you know her, Lanky Louise of the Bar des Malabars, rue Fontaine? No! You don't know her? . . . Well, we've known one another for four years. Then, I was just starting in this business, but she'd been at the game some time. She gave me some good advice, she taught me the little tricks of the trade; in fact she put me on the right track. . . . She had a pet boy, a Toulousain called Leo. One night at Half Naf's in the Avenue Clichy I was by myself having some onion soup when Leo

found me He looked me straight in the face, he took my hand and said to me 'My dear little girl, I'm gone on you I'll take you on whenever you like '"

"I hope you put him in his place "

"No I couldn't "

"Oh! "

"He was too good looking "

Pauloche turned to Denise's mother and said

"I don't know, Madame, if you have ever been mad over a young Toulousain "

The lady in black was very shocked at the preposterous suggestion She replied

"I have never been mad over any man, Mademoiselle! "

"Then you can't understand," concluded Pauloche simply

Denise began to grow extremely interested in this story She inquired if the little Toulousain was really very good looking

"Good looking is not quite the right way to put it," Pauloche added, "but he had *guts*

Small, dark as a stick of liquorice, his Trilby cocked on one side, curly eyelashes.

Ah! And his eyes, Madame! Two jet black lozenges in barley water And in addition to that he was as pugnacious as a Pekinese with its tail trapped in a door "

"And so! What happened then? It is very interesting, this story of yours!"

"And besides that, he was very clever with his hands—you should just see him! He could dag grapes with a hairpin and make venetian lanterns out of Tangerine orange skins. In the end we fixed things up. . . . That night, as we went out, he said to me, 'You'll come?' . . . I replied, 'Not half'; he took me with him. We agreed—so we lived together."

"But—what about Lanky Louise?"

In spite of everything, Denise's mother was not able to remain indifferent to Pauloche's adventure. She asked:

"What did she say about it, your friend?"

Pauloche made a gesture for them to be quiet.

"Don't all speak at once. I'll tell you. Leo and I stayed in bed for four whole days. . . . Yes, yes—four days by the clock. Ah!"

"Poor child. . . ."

"Oh, don't speak slightly of people who have a passion for one another. . . . When one's in love one does not say ill of one's neighbour."

Denise approved of the truth of this aphorism. Pauloche continued:

"In a word. All was going *Ar* when, six

weeks later, Lanky Louise discovered the whole caboodle'

"Ah! My God!"

"So she sent me a message by the page boy at Bobby's 'You are just a dirty rotter. If you have any guts you will turn up at Bobby's to night at ten o'clock, and I will tell you what I think about you'."

"And you went?"

"I did! I found Lanky Louise on the look-out for me. Called me all the names under the sun. I did the same to her. . . In the middle of the row she called me a cow."

I called her a *demi vierge*. We grabbed one another. We fought. She dagged me with a pin, and I've got the mark on me now, here—but I gave her one on the jaw. She screamed. I tossed my head. The bobbies came. I did a bunk. I got back to Leo's proud of my bruises and gashes."

Denise listened greedily to this real life serial

"It is terrible!" she said

Her mother was no less enthralled. She had edged up to the story teller so as not to lose a syllable of the account

"Where did you live?" she inquired

"Furnished rooms, rue de la Goutte

d'or. I went up to his room. I rushed through the door—nobody. On the table a scrap of paper. I read it: *'My dear little Pauloché, I can't help it, but I am forced to leave you. I have made the acquaintance of a Spanish Countess who has fixed me up in a handsome flat. Such is life. Forgive me. I kiss you. How I have loved you. Signed —LEO.'*"

The epilogue of the film drama drew an exclamation from Denise, whilst her mother showed by a wave of her gloved hand the detestation she felt at such vile conduct.

"The Tarpeian Rock is near the Capitol," added Denise sententially.

But Pauloché did not grasp her meaning, because she had not studied Roman history as she walked up and down the rue Notre-Dame de Lorette.

"I did not say it was at the Capitol," she retorted; "it was at Bobby's."

"Then what did you do, my dear girl?"

"I began to cry under a street lamp. I was wounded to the heart. At midnight I lay down on the bed where I had so many times made love to Leo, and naturally I could not sleep. The next morning I said to myself, 'My dear girl, you've got to end this. There

is only one thing to be done—Chuck yourself into the Seine' I dressed myself anyhow. All the morning I wandered up and down the river side. I was miserable. The sun gilded the roof of the Trocadero, and the little sparrows chirped in the trees. That seemed to make things look blacker and cut me to the quick. At last at four o'clock I said to myself, 'Come, be brave, Pauloche, you'd better take a plunge into the gravy.' Then I climbed on to the parapet and then——"

"And then?" asked Denise, carried away with excitement.

"Tell us, quickly!" her mother chimed in.

"Well, then, I suddenly remembered that I couldn't swim. So I went up to Chichy-Odeon and had several glasses of marc at the Cyrano in order to try and forget my troubles."

Denise glanced at her mother, who was sighing heavily, overcome with pity, and was wiping away a furtive tear. These two honest women, who apparently were not blasé to the wickedness of the *vie galante*, did not try to hide the emotion they felt on hearing this realistic recital of which the chief heroine had truthfully given an unvarnished account, with all its harrowing details. Denise's mind overflowed with an "olla podrida" of literary recollections, she thought of the novels she

used to read on the quiet in days gone by, from lowest depths of Dostoievsky and Gorki to the Roxana of Daniel de Foe and Eliza's daughter.

"What unsuspected dramas there are in this old Paris," she said. "Ah! Mademoiselle Paulоче. You must try and forget your troubles. . . . You are young. . . . Time will heal the deepest of wounds. . . . Even those inflicted by Leo and Lanky Louise."

"Yes, that's right. It's no good harping on it," answered Paulоче, as she swallowed her fifth glass. "One must eat, drink and be merry, and not worry. Life is sweet, the world is round, and my concierge suffers from warts!"

With the heedlessness that so often goes hand in hand with the outcast who, time after time, dances the waltz of despair, Paulоче, cheered up by the champagne, now found her adventure quite amusing. She thoroughly enjoyed, as her friend Lily said, the thrill she gave these two bourgeoisie ladies who were so serious and so attentive. Nobody had ever before taken her misfortunes to heart, nor listened so sympathetically to her sentimental odyssey. Again she wetted her carmine lips in the sparkling wine and added:

"Joking apart—it does me good to cough up my troubles to you."

There was a slight pause Then Denise became still more serious and said

"Now listen to me, Mademoiselle Pauloché Your confessions have moved me very much, and I feel that someone ought to take an interest in you "

"Oh! I am not any more interesting than plenty of others "

"Oh, yes Yes, indeed—take another glass of champagne "

"Very well then, pour me one out, just one more "

"Mademoiselle Pauloché, do not laugh I want to speak seriously to you I feel sure that you are fitted for something better than the kind of life you are leading Your present mode of existence is not worthy of you .Yes, indeed! You inspire me with sympathy, and I have a great longing to help you to re mould your destiny "

In spite of all, Pauloché could not help laughing The champagne was beginning to have its effect

"Ha! ha! I have started off with the wrong foot I have, Madame Forward, march! About turn, halt! "

"You would soon get used to it—quite easily "

"Yes As one gets used to a corset that is too tight "

Denise lowered her voice. She replied confidentially :

"Mademoiselle Paulоче, whilst you were telling us about your adventures, I had a sudden idea."

She hesitated, then she said :

"Will you give me the opportunity of rescuing you?"

Paulоче sat up straight. Then burst out laughing :

"What? Rescue me. I am not sinking in the Seine. . . ."

"Only from the moral point of view. Let me explain what I mean. . . . I have a nice house at Auteuil. . . ."

"With furnished apartments?"

"No, a private house. You can live in the annexe at the bottom of the garden, and I will look after your education."

For a moment Paulоче played an imaginary piano on the table, and then chuckled :

"Oh, good gracious!"

"I am quite serious. I will undertake to teach you an honourable profession and cleanse your mind. The only reward I look for is that it may awake in your heart a desire to do right and to love Virtue."

Denise's mother, who was watching Paulоче attentively, remarked :

"You don't seem very enthusiastic about it, Mademoiselle?"

Pauloche, dear girl, protested

'Oh, yes, Madame Oh, yes only, when someone all of a sudden suggests that you are to become virtuous—it is as if one had swallowed a lump of ice The first mouthful makes your teeth ache"

Denise insisted

Very well, then? As you agree, we will commence our moral regeneration?"

'I am a little knocked back, you know

Let me pull myself together If I get your meaning, you want to take me to your house?"

'Yes to redeem you"

Pauloche did not answer She silently toyed with her wine glass gazed from Denise to her mother and then with an ironical and knowing wink, she delivered herself of her opinion

'I think I've got you I am just beginning to tumble to the idea Yes! I see, that's the notion You're a couple of tarts, and you are on the look out for——"

With a wave of her hand Denise stopped her short

"Oh!

Mademoiselle Pauloche—don't

suggest such terrible things. Oh—how could you imagine such an idea. . . .”

Pauloche seemed staggered. She gave a doubtful toss of the head and said :

“All joke apart! You want to make a respectable girl of me?”

“Yes, really.”

“What a game, my dears! Here’s to you . . .”

Denise turned to her mother :

“Listen, Mother, I don’t think we need bother to wait for Monsieur Méridien. I have made my selection. . . . I am going to adopt Pauloche.”

And before her mother had time to express her opinion, Denise announced to the happy object of her choice that she had decided to take her under her protection, as Pauloche did not seem to offer any formal objection.

But Pauloche did not understand exactly the proposition that had been made to her. She hummed a popular tune whilst Denise paid the bill, and when Père Cassis put the hundred-franc note into his cash box she showed her appreciation by putting his velvet cap over his eyes with a playful pat :

“My word, Cassis! It’s killing. This lady wants me to chuck up the business! . . . Cassis! . . . I can already see myself becoming an honest woman. . . . Hair smooth and

parted in the centre, glasses on my neb, and my chests in a corset!"

Denise raised her eyebrows heavenward
 "Oh! what a way to talk myself a task

I have set
 However, so much the
 better—it makes it more worth while
 Now come along, Mademoiselle Pauloche—the
 car is waiting for us"

"The car?"

Pauloche had suddenly become serious
 Then all of a sudden she burst into a fit of
 laughter

"What a fool I am! How silly! For
 a moment I got the wind up! It is your car,
 isn't it?"

"Yes"

"I thought, might be, it was the Black
 Maria!"

Denise and her mother rose to go They
 waited for Pauloche, who remained seated, her
 elbows resting on the table, patting the silver-
 plated ice bucket with the champagne bottle in
 it She was in no hurry to get up

Père Cassis spoke to Denise

"You want to take her along with you
 right away?"

"Of course
 come along"

This way, Pauloche—

But still Pauloche did not budge She

cooled her forehead with a lump of ice. She still joked. She kept saying that she was not in such a hurry as all that.

“Oh, you know—Virtue is like pressed veal, it will keep!”

Denise's mother grew impatient. She pointed out to her daughter that she was making a mistake to insist, since the girl could not make up her mind. Then Pauloche appealed to her:

“Madame—I do not say no. Let me have my last night out. . . . To-morrow, at noon, I promise you I will come. See . . . yes, to-morrow, I promise.”

Denise hesitated for a moment, then she opened her bag.

“Very well. . . . Here is my card. . . . Madame Denise Lorande, 166 Quai de Passy. . . . Good night, my good girl. . . . Till to-morrow. . . .”

Pauloche raised her glass as though she was drinking their health. Then she ejaculated:

“That's a bet! . . . Good night! . . . To-morrow, serious business! . . .”

Then, with her hands like a loud-speaker, she called out:

“Shall I have to go to the Cluny Museum to get a chastity belt?”

Pere Cassis interrupted her, holding the door handle. He whispered confidentially

"Leave her, ladies. She is a little bit convivial. She will be all right to morrow."

"Yes," said Denise, "and will you tell Monsieur Meridien, when he comes, that I have managed the business without him. Good evening, Monsieur Cassis."

"I'll be sure to do that. Good night, ladies. Thank you."

The door shut. One could hear the car starting up. And the guitarist, who always managed to play something à propos, twanged the first bars of '*Good bye, and thank you for nothing*'.

The Buddha, in his white jacket, went back to his dug out, behind bottles of vermouth and whisky. Down below Fernande, like one of the Fates, assailed unceasingly her imperturbable Britisher. Lily had gone. Another girl was sitting in her place. Her mouth wide open before her pocket mirror. She was examining the work of her dentist who that very morning had affixed a gold left molar. A quiet couple had just come in and had seated themselves at the back under the ægis of

Jealousy with her yellow knitted brow. It was a young man with a profile like an opossum who was accompanied by a stout blonde with an insipid pink and white complexion, like a picture on a chocolate box.

All of a sudden Pauloche's merry voice broke the silence :

"I say . . . Cassis . . . What do you think of that?"

The Buddha whistled :

"My dear old girl, top-hole!"

"I totted 'em up in two ticks!"

"Yes."

Pauloche knitted her eyebrows.

"Tell me . . . Cassis . . . What's the idea?"

The Buddha gave a little chuckle :

"Perhaps they're from the Salvation Army."

"Maybe—anyway, their game's a bit tricky. . . . Ha, well! There's still a drop of milk in the bottle. . . . I'll finish it for them."

"You'll be getting married this year, Pauloche."

"Why, of course! To the Prince of W——!
. . . Here's to you, Cassis. . . . I say——"

"What?"

"There's some wheeze behind it all. I believe the old girl is a matrimonial agent. I'll bet they've got some rich Argentine to propose to me. Only it's a funny way to go

about it She's a clever decoy duck who runs a smart *salon* "

Cassis bent down to pick up a bit of sugar, and said as he bobbed up again from behind his parapet of bottles

' As a matter of fact, I agree with you "

A customer came into the bar A good looking young man The perfect but mawkish type of the hero of the penny novelette A straight nose drawn with a ruler by a geometrical expert between the two blue eyes of a very refined young lady A small brown moustache trimmed in the American style, and two hare's feet in front of his ears, which gave him the appearance of a sub lieutenant in the Hungarian Hussars in the time of the Hapsburgs A black cape lined with silk shrouded his supple figure like the flapping wings of a large bat

He had the appearance of a young idiot who mistakes his navel for a star, and who jumps about like a maggot under a cheese dish In three hops he reached the bar and thrust out towards Cassis his hand in its yellow kid glove with a little gold chain round his wrist

" Good evening, Cassis "

He unburdened himself of that remark as if he were saying

"Please remain covered."

The Buddha shook his hand.

"How are you, Monsieur Méridien?"

"I made an appointment with two lady friends of mine, do you happen by chance to——"

"They have been here and gone away."

Monsieur Méridien—better known as Loulou Méridien to the ladies who were fascinated by his charms—snapped his fingers; he was very annoyed.

"That's most tiresome. They relied upon me for——"

But Monsieur Cassis reassured him good-naturedly:

"Don't worry, Monsieur Méridien, they have managed quite well without you. . . ."

"What?"

And with a merry twinkle in his eye he leant over the bar and whispered to him:

"I say, you ought not to do that. . . . When you send ladies who come here to look for soul-sisters, you ought to tip me the wink beforehand—so that I can fix up my commission, eh?"

"What are you talking about, Cassis?"

"Come along! Don't try to put it across me. . . . I know what I'm talking about."

Monsieur Meridien fidgeted. He threw back the corner of his cape with a dainty jerk of the elbow and protested

"But you are absolutely wrong, Cassis. Madame Denise Lorande and her mother are Society women, of really high social position, perfectly straight and above board, and their intentions are quite honest."

The Buddha was not convinced. He replied

"She asked me to introduce her to Pauloche—see, the little tart at that table. You mean to tell me they want to rescue her?"

Monsieur Meridien now leant over the bar, and putting his hand familiarly on Monsieur Cassis's sleeve, he said

'Listen, Cassis. Listen to me a minute

I can put the whole thing in a nut shell. Madame Denise Lorande is the wife of one of my friends, Maxime Lorande. They have been married about two years—a regular love match. Only Maxime has made a bloomer by deceiving his wife. And now she can't bring herself to forgive him—you follow what I mean, Cassis?"

"Yes, as far as you've got, it's as clear as soda water."

"Disappointed in her ideals about a newly married wife, Madame Lorande told her

husband that she meant to divorce him. The lawyers have already got the matter in hand, and for the last two months, on account of the divorce proceedings, Madame Lorande has left her husband—you follow me, Cassis? . . .”

“Oh, yes, I understand what you say. But all the same that doesn’t explain why she——”

“Half a minute. When a young bride is disappointed in her marriage, what is the usual consequence?”

“That depends.”

“Exactly. Some of them become Capuchin nuns. Others provide themselves with a lover. Anyway, they all seek some diversion. . . . And that diversion is sometimes Art, sometimes religion, sometimes sport—metaphysics or poker-work, ectoplasms or a Citroen 6. Madame Lorande, disappointed in love, has turned to philanthropy, and is going to try and console herself by raising humanity from the mire.”

This time Monsieur Cassis was shaken in his incredulity. His scepticism melted under Monsieur Méridien’s persuasive eloquence.

“You are beginning to get me, Cassis?”

“Yes, yes, a little bit.”

“Wait a minute. That is not all. Her husband, who is madly in love with her, and

wants to put things right, thinks that he can do so through her Quixotic ideas And he has asked me to help him "

"In what way? "

"I am to be her professor of philanthropy. Acting on his instructions, I have advised Madame Lorande to rescue a girl from the sea of trouble And I thought the best way was to send her to your aquarium, Cassis "

The Buddha did not take offence He carried on the quip

"Thank you, Monsieur Méridien, for this aquarium "

"I gather that she has made her selection
That is the girl? "

He turned and pointed to Pauloche

"Yes, Pauloche A nice little kid "

Monsieur Meridien looked her up and down like a gentleman jockey criticizing a blood filly

"She certainly seems contented with her good luck "

"She is a bit drunk," Monsieur Cassis remarked casually

"That's of no consequence "

"Yes, she's got the idea that there is something shady behind it all If you persuaded her that it was an ordinary desire to

rescue her that they had in their minds, she wouldn't take it on."

Monsieur Méridien gave an impatient shrug of the shoulders.

"Ah—that's very annoying. Wait a minute—I'll go and fetch the husband."

"The lady's husband is here? . . . Where is he?"

"Outside in his car. He was afraid to come in for fear of meeting his wife. He is waiting for me to give him the tip as to what is happening. . . . I'll go and tell him."

Monsieur Méridien went out hurriedly, while Monsieur Cassis, who was never surprised at anything, smiled philosophically to himself as he wiped the grit from a stone bottle of curaçao.

The door opened again, and Monsieur Méridien came back accompanied by another man in dress clothes. It was Maxime Lorande. Barely forty, an optimist with square shoulders, a strong chin, and the general appearance of a happy man of the world. If he had not been born at Amiens one would have taken this Picardy man for a champion baseball player from Connecticut.

Monsieur Méridien brought him up to the bar.

"It's all right, don't be alarmed, you can-

come in The ladies have gone
 Let me introduce you, Monsieur Cassis, the
 proprietor "

They shook hands and plunged immediately
 into the subject of discussion It was a confab
 in undertones between the handles of the
 beer pump and a huge pile of bananas
 Monsieur Meridien picked up the thread of
 the argument

"So Denise has been and has chosen
 Pauloche The dark girl in pink sitting
 behind you "

Maxime looked at her

"That one? "

"Yes, but she's got a funny idea into her
 head about it all She thinks Denise's
proposal is a blind She'll go sure enough
 to morrow to your wife's house, but she is just
 as likely as not to do a bolt if this virtue
 business is too much for her Isn't it so,
 Cassis?

"That's my idea, Monsieur Méridien "

Maxime was a man who made up his mind
 on the spot He said

"We must fix this up "

"How? "

"I'll show you Come along with me
 to her table Monsieur Cassis, will you
 introduce me? "

The three men made a B-line for Pauloche, who gazed at them alternately, with a perfect air of contentment born of intoxication. She had let her hat fall on the seat beside her. Her head was bare, its jet black fringe all dishevelled, her arms stretched out on the back of the seat, and her well-formed bosom under the thin crêpe de Chine of her bedraggled dress showed to all and sundry her feeling of well-being which she exuded without effort, just as a rose gives off its sweet perfume. After she had gazed at the handsome Loulou Méridien and the muscular Maxime Lorande she continued her remarks to the barman :

“Cassis!—I’ve still got a thirst.”

But he tapped her gently on the shoulder.

“Half a minute. Let me introduce to you two friends of those ladies who stood you champagne just now.”

Pauloche nodded her head; she stretched herself and replied :

“Oh, yes. . . . Good evening, gentleman—what are we drinking?”

Maxime sat down beside her, made a sign to Méridien to do the same, and ordered another bottle of champagne. Then, turning to Pauloche, he remarked jokingly :

“You are not really tight?”

“Me, tight? What!”

She got up, tried to stand steadily on one foot and added

"Steady as Henry IV on his horse—look at me"

"That's all right" said Maxime "I want to talk to you about something important That lady who was here a little time ago, who invited you to go and stay at her house, to make an honest woman of you—you remember?"

Pauloche smacked her thigh and burst out laughing

"You bet! She was along with an old girl with window panes on her beak"

"I know those two ladies very well Their proposal is perfectly sincere Would you like, thanks to them, to give up gallantry and lead a more moral existence?"

Pauloche seemed astonished

"You mean to tell me they are serious?"

"Yes"

She thought for a minute and then blurted out her verdict,

"Oh, well, I don't want that"

"Why not?"

"Morality brings me out in a rash"

Monsieur Meridien tried to persuade the neophyte He used long words and talked like a pupil at the Conservatoire declaiming

a speech from Alexandre Dumas *fil.*s. Maxime, bored by this useless rhetoric, told him to shut up.

"Stop it! Let me talk to her. . . ."

And he turned to Pauloche :

"What would you say, Mademoiselle, if all the time the experience lasted, I promised you, myself, on the quiet, a salary of twenty-five louis a week? . . ."

The given quantities of the problem changed. Pauloche at once seemed to be attracted by this new form of arithmetic.

"Ah! That, of course, is another story! . . . I see what you mean—twenty-five louis a week?"

"My friend is, in fact, giving you a holiday and paying you all the time," added Monsieur Méridien.

Maxime gently put his hand on her arm.

"Pauloche, think for a moment or two before you say no."

But she had already made up her mind. She exclaimed :

"Oh, that's a bit of all right. . . . Under those circumstances I'll take it on. . . . Twenty-five louis a week! . . . Now you're talking."

Maxime seemed pleased. He refilled Pauloche's glass and finished by saying :

"Mind you—not a word of this to Madame

Lorande You understand My friend
and I have naturally not said anything
Mum's the word! If not, no more pay, you
follow me?"

"Don't you worry! I understand right
enough When I shut my mouth I shut it like
a safe Only, hark you, what's this woman
done for you that you are playing this little
game?"

"We want to do her a good turn, that's all"

Pauloche did not bother further She was
not a person to trouble herself about final
causes nor the vital importance of the laws of
logic.

"Ah, good!" said she "So that's what
I've got to do I've got to let myself be
rescued by a philanthropic lady for twenty five
louis a week Anyway, that's better than
letting out chairs at Saint Sulpice"

Maxime shook her by the hand

"So—that's a bargain, eh, Pauloche?"

"Done with you, M'sieur To morrow
at noon I'll be at Madame——" She hesitated

"Madame—how do you call her?" She
gave me her card Ah, yes! Madame Denise

Lorande 166 Quai de Passy I'll
be there And I'll wipe my shoes on the mat
before I go in and I'll throw my lip stick into
the gutter"

II

A GRAND piano showed its ivory teeth in its ebony mouth, which was open. Between the three windows, looking on to the garden of a private house one noticed the pale colouring of several pastels. A pouf covered with cheese-coloured chintz half-hidden between two dainty armchairs optimistically exhibited its rotundity. It was Madame Denise Lorande's drawing-room.

An unexpected noise issued from this drawing-room. It was not the ripple of an intimate conversation, nor the subdued rhythm of a confidential chat. It was the rat-tat-tat of tiny sharp taps caused by little metal letters on an ebony disc. Close to the third window a woman was working a typewriter.

Pauloche the typist—

Pauloche dressed in black—

Pauloche wearing a plain, simple little robe, innocent of frills and furbelows with a little white muslin collar round the neck.

Pauloche without a vestige of paint
Not a trace of carmine upon her pretty lips
No kohl on her eyelids Just a slight
suspicion of powder Nothing more

And Pauloche sitting on an office stool,
bending over a typewriter, tapping it with the
feverish enthusiasm of a neophyte who had
been converted for about a month Merely for
practice she was busy copying a few pages of
a precis of Practical Morality For about five
weeks she had been a guest at Denise's house
She was the Telemachus of this charming,
patient and generous Mentor

The day after that portentous evening
when Destiny came and offered her a little
trip to the land of Virtue, personally conducted
by a highly respectable lady, Pauloche had
rung the door bell of No 166 Quai de Passy
She had been enthroned then and there, just
as one cures certain morphinomaniacs by
cutting off their daily *piqûres*, so Denise
straightway plunged her pupil into a chilly
bath of charity She had been installed at
the bottom of the garden in a modest little
room, like a highly virtuous pensionnaire, it
contained a brass bedstead of moderate size,
a strip of tapestry on the walls, and a Louis
Philippe chest of drawers The next morning
when she awoke Pauloche had gazed at

idyllic pictures in white enamelled frames, a water-colour drawing of Mons Cathedral, Balestrieri's Kreutzer Sonate and a lithograph of the coronation of Napoleon I. She had touched with reverence the sprig of sacred palm that had dried between the wings of an angel made of biscuit Sevres China, and quite seriously she had turned over the pages of a handsomely bound copy of the "Language of Flowers."

Pauloche kept on gently tapping the little white discs of the keyboard. She was reading out aloud the phrase that she had just typed :

"Considerations concerning Morality and conscience from the double point of view, that of the individual and of Society. . . . 'Standard . . . Is there one? No. . . .' Morality does not depend upon immutable transcendental principles, but rather upon accidental or inherent ones."

She stopped short, bent down over the book, and repeated to herself :

"Accidental? . . . Inherent? . . . What does it mean? . . . He uses some words, this author."

And she made the little hammers of the machine rattle more noisily. She had not noticed that Henriette, the housemaid, had

come into the room to put some fresh flowers into the flower vases. Whilst Paulоче was busy picking out the right letters on the keyboard the maid was looking at her out of the corner of her eye. Chaffingly she asked.

"Do you really enjoy doing that?"

"Very much," replied Paulоче without raising her head.

"Is it Madame Lorande who has ordered you to tap that machine?"

"She has not ordered me."

Henriette tossed her head as she cut off the stalk of a rose that was too long.

"Then why do you do it?"

"Because I like to."

"Anyway, if I may be allowed to say so, you are not used to that sort of work."

Paulоче looked up at her.

"No, my girl. Oh, you can speak your mind. A month ago I used to frequent the night cabarets. Now, thanks to Madame Lorande, I am going to have a respectable occupation, and I shall be able to rise from the gutter. That's good, isn't it?"

"You never regret the old days and their good times?"

"What good times?"

"I don't exactly know myself. Before."

"Do you mean the days when I used to get

up at five o'clock in the afternoon; when I used to go and take a port in the little bar in the rue Fontaine after I'd had a nip with Madame Gandoura. . . . The days when I used to run after the Argentine boys in order to replenish my money-box? No, thanks."

Henriette sighed :

"Ah, well! . . ."

"You would like to have changed places with me?"

"Oh, yes."

"You would like to leave the feather duster for love?"

"Rather!"

"You are making a mistake, my girl. Love is just like a feather duster. When you use it too much it loses its feathers."

This shrewd aphorism would have drawn forth criticism from Henriette had not the door opened at that instant and Madame Maline appeared. With her aggressive pincenez, her bunch of keys hanging from her waist, dressed in a plain indoor dress, Madame Maline, the factotum at her daughter's house, used to make her tours of inspection. The terror of all the servants, she went from one room to another like a suspicious keeper of a museum. Nothing escaped her eagle eye, neither a speck of dust between two doors,

nor a bit of fluff left under an occasional table, nor the slightest mark on the second pane to the right, nor the least little stain on the brass fire dog on the left of the hearth in the smoking room

Madame Maline kept Denise's house just as houses used to be kept in 1860, that is to say before the age of syndication, of relativity and of octoplasms. She had also kept her husband Monsieur Maline, in perfect order, but for thirty four years he had found a way of escape from the bonds of her rigid supervision

"What are you doing here, Henriette?"

"Nothing, Madame. I came to put these gladioli in water"

"Very well then, Henriette, now that you have done so you can go back to your pantry"

"Yes, Madame"

Henriette obeyed. Pauloche rained a heavy shower of letters upon her sheet of typing paper. Her relations with the mother of her benefactress if they were not exactly cordial were, at any rate perfectly correct. There existed between them a kind of armed neutrality. Madame Maline secretly disapproved of Denise's whims. She looked upon philanthropy as an article of exportation,

and felt that one could certainly be a virtuous woman without opening one's home to the outcasts of the eighteenth *arrondissement*. She did not dare to show openly to Pauloché that she was not fitted to live under Madame Lorandé's roof, but she gave her to understand that she considered the Cassis Bar more suited to a girl of her class.

Standing in the middle of the *salon*, she stared at Pauloché. Opening her mouth to speak, and then changing her mind, she shut up the piano; she put a picture straight; she scrutinized the cleanliness of the ash-pan, and she ended up by saying:

"Pauloché — you were chattering to Henriette."

"No, Madame."

"I heard you talking."

"I was merely asking her if there was any more paper for the typewriter."

And Pauloché continued typing mechanically. Madame Maline did not seem satisfied. She put a cushion into the right place and casually drew her finger across the lower shelf of the what-not.

"This what-not has not been dusted since the Exhibition in '89," she added simply.

Pauloché had come to her last sheet of paper. She turned and asked politely:

"Madame Lorande has not come back yet?"

"No, not yet"

"Where has she gone?"

Madame Maline looked Pauloche up and down, and then replied dryly

"To do good"

Then she took from her dress pocket a little article that she concealed in the palm of her hand. She went up to Pauloche and said:

'Pauloche'

'Yes, Madame?'

"I should feel greatly obliged if, in future, you would not leave your lip sticks in the dining room"

Pauloche inspected the incriminating evidence with an astonished air

"My lip sticks, Madame? I don't use them nowadays"

"Dear me is that so?"

Pauloche held up her face for Madame Maline's inspection

"Would you like to examine my lips with a magnifying glass? I am quite innocent of any make up, Madame"

Madame Maline could not contradict her. She put the little silver case in her pocket and added

You appear to think that that is something extraordinary! As for myself, Mademoiselle,

my skin has never been contaminated by a powder-puff."

"Ah!"

"Quite true. I am not afraid to look at myself in the glass."

An angelic smile lit up Pauloche's face.

"One can get used to danger."

"Mademoiselle, my face is not a danger to anyone."

"I did not mean that, Madame. As a matter of fact that lip-stick belongs to Madame Lorande."

"That may be so—my daughter makes up very much since you came here. . . . I do not know if it is your influence, but you most certainly have a bad effect upon her."

Pauloche protested against such a flagrant piece of injustice.

"Oh, Madame! You cannot accuse me of wearing loud costumes, nor of making up my eyes. I am sure that my behaviour is most proper, and one can't possibly be more honestly converted than I am."

"Is that so? And my husband, have you made it your business to convert him as well?"

"Madame, your insinuations are uncalled for. My behaviour to him is strictly polite and respectful."

"Perhaps, but the fact remains that you

cannot be five minutes anywhere without him coming to see what progress you are making ”

‘ Your husband is interested in my reformation, I suppose ’

“ Possibly so but please do not try to lead him on ”

This waspish conversation was suddenly cut short The door of the *salon* was opened softly, and an elderly gentleman poked his head in and squeaked out “ Coo coo ! ”

It was Monsieur Maline Although well on in the sixties, he was still a gay dog, and prided himself on being an old buck As he was a man of leisure, he spent as much time and care on his toilet as a coquette of an uncertain age One might describe him as a symphony in black and white His white spats set off his well pressed black trousers His white waistcoat contrasted smartly with his well cut coat The white carnation in his button hole with the black and white chess board effect of his shepherd’s plaid tie which was set off with a black pearl pin His little white moustache even threw into relief the broad black ribbon of his tortoiseshell eyeglass When he walked he put his left arm behind his back and his right parallel with the base of his breast bone He spoke in a tremu

lous voice, but always with great deliberation and precision.

To him the arrival of Paulоче in the house had been as unexpected as it was agreeable. Far from being provoked about it, as his august wife had been, he warmly approved of this kind-hearted experiment, and never failed to indulge in a little quiet chat with this refugee from the rue Lepic. This very afternoon he had made discreet inquiries from Henriette, and had found out that Paulоче was working in the *salon*. The chance was too good to be missed. Unluckily his inopportune "coo-coo" did not receive the reply that he anticipated. It was Madame Maline who, turning round sharply, rapped out:

"Ah! so you are here again, are you?"

Monsieur Maline concealed his discomfiture and, with the perfect urbanity of an elderly gentleman who takes things as he finds them, replied:

"Why, yes, Rosemonde—so you are here, then?"

Madame Maline gazed at Paulоче with obvious satisfaction; she remarked icily:

"What did I say to you just now, Mademoiselle? You attract my husband like a piece of Brie cheese attracts flies."

Monsieur Maline protested. This analogy irritated him.

"My dear, you make a mistake when you compare Mademoiselle Pauloché to a piece of cheese. Hal ha! ha! For I should have said '*un cœur à la crème*'."

"I do not wish to discuss it with you, Sigismond."

"Very well, Rosemonde."

He went up to Pauloché, put up his eyeglass and looked over her afternoon's work.

"Well, my child. . . And how goes this tiresome business?"

"Better and better, thank you, Monsieur Maline."

Madame Maline was getting thoroughly worked up. She said:

"You leave her tiresome business alone, my dear."

"Don't you realize, Rosemonde—it would be very remiss on my part not to take a friendly interest in the progress of our charming guest!"

Several sarcastic remarks passed between them while Pauloché went on steadily tapping out abstruse phrases upon the evolution of contemporary ethics. In the end Madame Maline was obliged to go away as Henriette

wanted her. But before she did so she let fly this parting shot at her husband:

"Sigismond, you will be the cause of my death with your meretricious behaviour."

Monsieur Maline watched his wife go out, and muttered under his breath as he readjusted his refractory monocle:

"No such luck as that, I'm afraid, my dear. . . ."

Pauloche got up, highly amused. She shook her finger at him and called out laughingly:

"Monsieur Maline, it is very naughty of you to talk like that."

But Monsieur Maline, delighted to be alone with Pauloche at last, took her by the hand and made her sit beside him, and asked her in a confidential tone:

"Ah, Pauloche! . . . Have you ever tasted rat poison?"

"No."

"Or cyanide of potassium?"

"No."

"Or vomito negro?"

"No."

"Well, they are tasty morsels compared with Rosemonde."

"Oh, Monsieur Maline!"

The old boy nodded his head

"I know what I am talking about I have known her for thirty five years "

Pauloche looked at him out of the corner of her eye

"I believe you have been deceiving her "

"That's just what she thinks She makes out that I've had thirty five mistresses in thirty five years "

"Oh! "

Monsieur Maline waited for a moment to see the effect of his remark, and then he added

"As a matter of fact I've had eighty eight "

' No! "

Pauloche's incredulity needed dispelling at once So Monsieur Maline took a little green leather notebook from his pocket and tapped it lightly with the edge of his eyeglass

"I have always kept a record of my adventures, my child This little book contains notes on my idylls, in chronological sequence I told you I had had eighty eight. You can see for yourself They are catalogued in their proper order Look! Here they are "

Pauloche was very interested, and as she turned over the leaves of the green pocket book she found that Monsieur Maline had

spoken the truth. There was a *précis* of his love affairs. After each name there was a little sign, a little cuneiform character, a little cabalistic cipher. Pauloche pointed to one of them with her finger.

“1912—Emilienne—18 x 14. What does that mean, 18 x 14?”

“My blood pressure: 18 before and 14 after.”

— “1913—Georgette—12 G. . . . Why 12 G?”

“Twelve grammes of sugar. . . . I had a touch of diabetes. . . .”

Monsieur Maline slipped the notebook back into his pocket and continued:

“Eighty-eight minus thirty-five, that makes fifty-three little birds that I have had great success with. . . . What? What manipulation! . . . Because, to deceive one's wife, well, anybody can do that. To deceive her so that she has not the slightest suspicion, that is better. But to deceive her fifty-three times without her knowing, that is indeed high art. . . . The work of a virtuoso. . . . I am the Paganini of the Quai de Passy.”

Pauloche smiled as she listened to Monsieur Maline.

“Why do you tell me all this, Monsieur Maline?”

The old buck put his fingers in the pockets of his white waistcoat, leaned back on the couch, and hazarded with a questioning air:

"Pauloche, I am not worn out for my age?"

"Certainly not!"

Pauloche's neck was very tempting. Monsieur Maline went up and kissed her surreptitiously, saying:

"So eighty eight plus one would make eighty nine."

But Pauloche jumped up hastily, and protested with well feigned indignation:

"You make me frightened!"

"Oh! One should never frighten a woman even in sheets."

"Please be serious, Monsieur Maline. You know that your daughter has taken me under her roof in order that I may be rescued

I am trying to forget my former temptations, to live another life and talk like a regular lady. Why do you come and play Mephistopheles behind my typewriter?"

Monsieur Maline got up. He fondled the machine just as if he were caressing an unruly dog, and replied:

"Come, come, my little friend. Don't take this regeneration with such tragic seriousness. I bless the Fate which prompted Denise to

reclaim you. . . . Yes, yes, indeed, Pauloche, ever since you came here the tic-tac of your machine has haunted me unceasingly: it is just as though you were tapping upon my heart a series of notes of exclamation!"

Pauloche dropped her eyes and murmured

"Stop humbugging, Monsieur Maline."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't try and spoil your daughter's good work. . . . Off you go . . . take a stroll. . . . A little exercise . . . that will calm you."

Monsieur Maline obeyed. He took a walk up and down the *salon*, dangling his monocle on the end of its silk cord. His appetite seemed to be whetted by this *tête-à-tête*. He pranced up and down like an old war horse when it hears a military band.

"I am taking exercise. . . . That does not soothe me in the least. . . . Pauloche, if I was twenty-five years old I would carry you off in my cabriolet and I would take you to Bougival, like Marinette."

"Marinette?"

"Wait a minute."

He once more took out his little green notebook and turned over its leaves and found the page.

"1879—Marinette—54. . . ."

"Fifty-four? . . . Was that your pulse?"

"No The size of her waist. How much do you measure, my little friend?"

"Oh, but one doesn't wear a corset nowadays!"

"Wait, my hand measures twenty-five centimetres, so many hands, so many times twenty-five"

The gallant geometrician, Monsieur Maline, set about calculating the size of the circumference, and Pauloche complacently let him do so. He had just measured two hands and a half when Madame Maline reappeared in the doorway of the *salon*. She gave forth an "Oh!" which synthesized far less the height of her surprise than the depth of her indignation.

With his hand still clasping Pauloche's waist, Monsieur Maline tried to explain matters.

"My dear, don't go and rush to conclusions."

But Madame Maline had already directed her attack at her husband's innocent partner.

"This is the limit! Never tell me again, Mademoiselle, that you do not try to lead on my husband!"

"No, Madame, I promise you"

The chivalrous Monsieur Maline wanted to

draw upon himself the violent attack of the insensed Juno. He exclaimed:

"Listen! Wait! It is entirely my fault, Rosemonde. I was calculating with my hand . . ."

But Madame Maline's right hand came with a bang on his cheek, and the sound of the blow broke the silence, while the outraged wife exclaimed:

"Indeed! Calculate that for a time!"

Pauloche honestly regretted this contretemps that was not her fault. She got up, took her papers and remarked with Christian forbearance:

"I think I had better go, Madame. I don't like to see an old gentleman knocked about."

"Very well, you can go, Mademoiselle. I will not prevent you."

So she went out as the old boy muttered:

"Oh! Oh!"

"That will teach you! . . . Casanova!"

But his wife's blow affected him far less than Pauloche's remarks. He grunted in a melancholy voice:

"I don't mind the box on the ears. Old gentleman—she called me an old gentleman!"

Voices were heard behind the door.

Madame Maline was astonished, and was going to find out the cause of the disturbance when her daughter came in. She had just got out of her car with her faithful little Loulou Meridien, a small boy barely six years old, and a stray fox terrier which had an improvised bandage at the end of his tail, made with a lace handkerchief, stained with blood. This unexpected invasion immediately put an end to the quarrel between Monsieur and Madame Maline, who, quite taken aback, stared with astonishment at the child, the terrier, the immaculate Loulou and Denise.

Madame Maline was the first to speak.

"But what on earth is all this about?"

Then Denise, with much hurry and fussiness, still boiling over with excitement, went off into a disconnected explanation.

"Good morning, Mamma—good morning, Papa. Don't be alarmed. I will explain everything. Don't cry, my little man—we will soon find your mamma."

Then she turned to Méri dien.

"My dear, take this terrier's lead, it worries me. Mamma, you will understand in a minute. Now don't cry, my little darling."

Your dear mother is not lost."

Loulou Meridien had shaken hands with Monsieur Maline and kissed Madame Maline's

fingers. But she reprimanded Denise, regardless of the disconsolate face of the small boy, who was on the verge of tears.

"No, this is the last straw! Now the place is being turned into a menagerie—a bazaar—a refuge for lost animals—and a home for waifs and strays. . . ."

Denise tried to quieten her mother.

"Mother—I beg you—you will frighten the child. . . ."

"The poor child is already so upset," added Méridien.

Denise asked her father to look after the child while she rang for Henriette. Monsieur Maline was by no means averse, since the interruption had put an end to his wife's upbraiding. He scrutinized the frightened child through his eyeglass and said:

"Where does the little lad come from?"

"I found him outside a shop, forgotten by his mamma," replied Denise. "That's so, you lost your mamma, didn't you, my little man?"

The child whined:

"I've lost my mamma. . . . Yes, I've lost my mamma. . . . Oh! . . . where is my mamma?"

In the meantime Madame Maline's attention was taken up with the little fox-terrier. Sitting

in front of the fire, he seemed to dream of an Eden inhabited by lumps of sugar and chicken bones

"And this? Where have you picked up this wretched thing?"

"That poor little doggie?" He has had bad luck. He has almost been run over,"

explained Denise

"And what is this lump of rag?"

"He had the end of his tail cut off by a tram. So I bound it up with my handkerchief, and Loulou carried him to the car. Papa—wash his wound with boric acid and water. And, Loulou, will you take care of the child?"

Henriette had barely got into the room when Monsieur Maline called her and said

'Henriette! Listen. A basin, some water, some iodine, some cotton wool, some sticking plaster and an aspirin tablet for the dog."

"No, Henriette!" ejaculated Denise. 'Look after the child first."

But Madame Maline cut in

"Come, come! If I don't take things in hand we shall get nothing done here. Let us have some method. We must do things in order! Henriette! Make a cup of chocolate for the fox terrier and bring some iodine to bathe the child's tail. No, the

dog's—I've got it the wrong way round . . . just the opposite. . . . It is really your fault, Denise. . . . You've upset the entire household with all this. . . ."

Denise tried to appease her mother. She threw her arms round her neck, full of high spirits, and cut in with :

"My darling Mamma, don't be upset, come ! . . . I have had a hectic afternoon. Just fancy, when I was coming out of the institute for broken down Chinese . . ."

"A china shop?"

"No, a philanthropical society," added Loulou Méridien.

"I saw a crowd at the door of a tea-shop in the Place Vendôme. . . . This little fellow was crying and looking for his mamma. I made no bones about it. I took him by the hand and put him into my car, saying to myself : I'll comfort the little fellow, and let the police know so as to put his mother's mind at rest."

Madame Maline was almost in hysterics when her husband butted in in a jocular way.

"You see, Rosemonde—it is forbidden to deposit children on a dust heap !"

While Denise was telling the story of her adventure, Loulou Méridien tried to cheer up the little boy, who was crumpling his beret in

his nervous hands Madame Maline went up to him, which made him still more nervous, and said

"Doesn't the little idiot know his address? What is your name, you little nincom poop?"

The child burst into tears

"Hi, hi! that lady frightens me!"

They tried to calm him, and at last they got a definite answer His name is Dédé!

"Dede, short for Amédée?" asked Madame Maline

The child began to cry again, and went and hid himself behind Denise's armchair, who expostulated

"Don't you see, Mamma, you are frightening him!"

"Ah! He makes me tired, this child He isn't a child, he's a waterfall"

Denise then began to try and find out who he was

"You have a mamma, haven't you?"

"No"

"A papa then?"

"No"

Madame Maline gave another laugh

"Don't you see he was born without any parents?"

"Where do you live?"

He put his finger in his nose and replied :

"I dunno. . . ."

Monsieur Maline, who was attending to the terrier's tail, hazarded the suggestion that this mysterious child lived under the archways of the bridges, and was the offspring of a dog-stealer and a servant-maid out of work. Madame Maline scolded her husband. It was certainly not the moment to try and be funny.

"Your name is Dédé—what?" Loulou Méridien persisted.

"Just Dédé."

Madame Maline threw up her hands to the ceiling.

"Now you know! You have got hold of a bastard. . . . It will be easy to dig out his parentage! Dédé, nothing else."

Monsieur Maline suggested telephoning to the police-station near the Madeleine. He went and unhooked the receiver. But his wife took it from him, saying :

"Let me do it, Sigismond. . . . We can't keep this little rat for life. Ah! Denise had a fine idea when she picked that up on the road-side. . . . Hallo! . . . The Madeleine police-station. . . . Dédé, simply, nothing else. . . . What, you want someone to substantiate it? Hallo! . . . Is that the officer in charge? . . .

What? His assistant Don't you understand he was lost at four o'clock, rue Royale What? Why no, Monsieur

I am not seeking lost property It is not about an umbrella, it is about a child

Listen a moment My daughter, Madame Lorande, wants to advise you—what? Oh no no Monsieur it is not her child, it is a little boy of five or six years old who has been lost by his parents, and she has taken charge of him out of pure good nature

Yes What? What do you say?

That we can keep him, and if he is not claimed in a year and a day But, my good man, are you insulting me? What!

What! What is that you say—it is too much No, Monsieur! My daughter is not a child stealer! I wish to lay a complaint to the

Chief of the Police And you are a silly fool At least you can be polite!

Oh! ill mannered indeed! I'll ring off, Monsieur! What? What do you say?

It is a paying game? Oh! "

Madame Maline was furious She hung up the receiver The lost child continued to sob his heart out Henriette was told off to take the little wretch into the dining room, and help him forget his trouble by munching some cakes and jam She was also told to look after

the fox-terrier that Monsieur Maline had attended to with the dexterity of a veterinary surgeon. The tears of the child and the barking of the dog ceased. There was an ominous silence in the room. Monsieur Maline lit a cigar. Loulou Méridien smoked a cigarette at the window leading to the garden. Denise arranged some gladioli in a vase.

Madame Maline re-opened hostilities.

"Mark my word, Denise, one of these days you will come home with a tribe of tramps and the entire Zoo!"

But Denise was not in the humour to tolerate her mother's sarcasm. She tossed her felt toque on to the settee, shook her shingled locks like a blood-mare shaking her mane when she neighs in the field, and said:

"It's unkind of you to taunt me because I try to console myself for my unfortunate marriage by doing good works."

"Ah! you ought to be called Madame Don Quixote! You have as little sense of the realities of life as dear old Cervantes. It's true! Ever since you've had this matrimonial difference you've plunged madly into a whirlpool of philanthropy. The result is that the housemaid wastes her time attending to mutilated fox-terriers, and I get insulted by a police-officer owing to your lost children."

Loulou Meridien thought it was his duty to defend Denise. He swung round, a cigarette in the corner of his mouth, his hands on his hips, his legs apart, in their irreproachable trousers, his feet shod in black, patent leather shoes with buckskin tops, and remarked in a respectful but firm voice

"May I remark, Madame, that if Madame Lorande had been happy in her married life all this would never have happened"

Denise was very bucked. She said

"Loulou, you are right. Stick up for me, Loulou. You understand, at any rate!"

"Instead of bothering about humanity she would be much better employed in making up her differences with her husband," interposed Madame Maline

"Oh! As for that never! I've
already told you, Mamma Never!"

"More's the pity, my child"

"Mamma, my ideal has been shattered. I no longer believe in love"

Monsieur Maline got up. He had heard this dispute between his wife and his daughter over and over again. He knew their arguments by heart. He knew that Denise would repeat time after time, with all her might, that she never again wanted to set eyes on her husband, as he had deceived her. While his

wife, with her experience of the world, would advise her daughter to wipe such a forgivable fault off the slate. He took Méridien by the arm and whispered as he led him into the garden :

“Come along, my dear fellow. . . . We are *de trop* between mother and daughter. . . . It's getting rather warm. . . . It is amazing how people shriek at one another when they talk about love or philanthropy ! ”

The departure of the two men was the signal for a short *entr'acte*. Denise stretched herself on the soft velvety cushion. Her waggling little feet were the only sign of her agitation. With her eyes half-closed she sucked the three large pearls of her necklace. Madame Maline, sitting on the edge of an armchair, tapped the arm with her fingers. She tried to compose herself. Then suddenly the battle began again.

“Denise—let me tell you one thing. . . . You make life impossible, with your ideas.”

The little feet waggled a little faster.

“Remember St. Vincent-de-Paul, Mamma ! ”

“St. Vincent-de-Paul was an old bachelor. . . . He did not bring light o' loves into his mother's house to improve their morals.”

“Mamma ! . . . Don't say anything against Pauloche. . . . If you knew how proud I am of her conversion.”

Madame Maline gave a cynical laugh

"Her conversion? You think so, do you? A farce, my dear She twists us all round her little finger, from your father to Henriette This Pauloche of yours will bring us all to grief "

"Oh!

"I know what I am talking about Just a moment ago your father had his arm round her waist Oh, yes yes! I saw him And she has got hold of you "

"Of me?"

"This flighty girl has a bad influence on you, my child Oh, I notice things

It is she who has taught you to make up your eyes like you do, and to ogle men like you do, I could hardly believe it was you "

Denise was sitting up among the cushions She seemed flabbergasted

"Me? I ogle men "

"Monsieur Meridien, for one Before Pauloche came you were very proper with him Now, you look at him like a cat on the tiles And you call him Loulou To call him that is not *comme il faut* "

Madame Maline's remarks were not so unreasonable as Denise pretended to think

them. The presence of Pauloche in the house had had an effect upon her in spite of herself. There is a saying that an over-ripe apple in a basket is enough to contaminate all the rest, but a sound fruit does not improve its neighbours. This comparison borrowed from pomology applies equally well to humanity. The social contact of Pauloche affected Denise without her realizing it. Not that this upright lady was capable of disregarding her high principles and ignoring the moral code so dear to her heart, because a little courtesan confided to her, without beating about the bush, the misdeeds of her past life. But it is dangerous to play with fire, even with the cinders that one thinks are dead.

Denise was very intrigued with her visitor's confessions. Although her strict duty was to refrain from listening to recitals of her libertine prowesses, she sometimes encouraged the realistic details which satisfied her curiosity.

She thoroughly lectured her protégée, but she did not object to her intimate confessions. Instead of being shocked by her former *amours*, she grew indifferent to the danger. And the danger which threatened her was Loulou Méridien.

Before she knew Pauloche she had never had the least desire to start a flirtation with

this friend of her husband Now she did not find that she was so far from allowing herself to be made love to by the charming man, who, under the cloak of charitable works, tried day by day to lead her farther and farther from the path of virtue

Her mother's reproaches this afternoon did not seem to affect her very greatly She considered it rather absurd that her good mamma should reproach her for calling Monsieur Méridien, Loulou She got up, stretched herself, smiled charmingly, and, settling herself down in front of Madame Maline she remarked satirically

"Mamma you are absolutely bughouse!"

Madame Maline could hardly believe her ears

"Absolutely bughouse! Your every expression savours of your Pauloché Fancy telling your mother that she is absolutely bughouse Oh!"

"Ah well it is a little strange, perhaps"

"You have never spoken to me like that

Take care Denise, instead of guarding the virtue of your protegee, it may be she who leads you astray Denise, your husband

rang me up yesterday He is terribly unhappy—and I think that——"

Denise interrupted her

"Do not speak again of Maxime, once and for all. . . . He gets my goat!"

"Gets your goat! Oh, I don't understand you!" Madame Maline rose, thoroughly scandalized. She picked up her bunch of keys, opened the door and repeated as she went out:

"He gets her goat. . . . Oh! . . ."

Maxime Lorande had deceived his wife. He had deceived her without thinking much about it; a momentary affair, done quite casually, just as one idly turns over the pages of an out-of-date illustrated weekly at the pedicurists. Unfortunately this casual infidelity did not remain secret. Destiny, that tiresome ball that upsets the skittles of our projects, went so far, as to surpass itself in the art of manufacturing a series of coincidences.

Maxime's accomplice in this infidelity was a pretty shop assistant named Rosine, who supplied materials to Denise's dressmaker. One day Rosine came with some new models of combinations with embroidered flaps at the bosoms; when these dainty drawbridges were lowered they allowed the wearer to give air to her charms. She was chatting away to a mannequin in a frosted-glass fitting-room. Denise was having a dress fitted on in the

adjoining compartment Suddenly she heard this scrap of conversation

"You seem tired, Rosine?"

"Ah! Don't speak about it, Simone
A 'hot' night last night with a fellow whose wife thought he was at Bordeaux"

Denise pricked up her ears Maxime had said the night before that he had some important business that compelled him to go for a couple of days to the Gironde district

The mannequin replied jokingly

'And you had a high old time?'

Why not—must have a night out some times

"An Argentine?"

"No—a Parisian You must know
his wife She is one of your customers
Madame——"

'What?'

Rosine repeated the name more loudly

'Madame Lorande'

The mannequin chuckled with delight

"Be quiet, my dear I fancy she is in the shop"

Denise was convinced She had it out in a scene the following day Maxime, deeply repentant, begged his wife to pardon his lapse Denise expressed her intention of divorcing him She was still too young not to take, in

a tragic manner, her husband's mistake, who, all the same, loved her, and would have willingly sacrificed all the modistes of the rue St. Honore in order to get back his wife's affection, which he had let slip.

Maxime, however, had not given up hope of winning back his wife. As soon as his mother-in-law, who sincerely deplored his *faux pas*, had discreetly told him that Denise was trying, in philanthropy, to forget his deception, he had settled on a plan of action. Loulou Méridien was deputed to assist him, and during the month that Pauloche had been redeeming her past, Maxime watched his opportunity, patiently, and with the tenacity of a scorned lover.

This very afternoon, after frequent hesitations, he had resolved to consult Madame Maline. She was his ally in this instance. Thanks to her, he could obtain the latest information and could act accordingly.

He rang, asked Henriette to tell Madame Maline, and was shown into her little boudoir. She came to greet him immediately and offered him her hand, glad to welcome him.

"Ah, Maxime," she whispered, "you have come at the right moment. . . . Ah, my poor child!"

"What has happened, then?"

"Have you heard the news, Maxime? Denise has brought a prostitute to the house that she wants to rescue"

Maxime pretended to be surprised

'A girl named Pauloche, isn't it? Meridien has told me What next, I wonder?'

"Yes, a girl called Pauloche, who is very much at home here, and who pretends she is repentant, who taps the typewriter with one hand and makes eyes at my husband with the other"

"Does she make eyes with her left hand?"

'Oh, you know what I mean It is an absurd arrangement The girl lives in the lodge at the bottom of the garden, where she sleeps under a bunch of sanctified palm leaves She thinks perhaps that she takes me in

Maxime sat down beside Madame Maline He bent over towards her and said in a confidential tone

"If you want my opinion, dear Mother Denise has gone too far"

'Ah, well! I am glad to hear you talk like that'

The mother in law seemed enchanted to hear her son in law utter such reasonable sentiments Maxime went on

"You know that I have a broad mind, and

that I take life as it comes? All the same there are limits. So long as Denise looked after run-over dogs it was all right. Now that she introduces fallen women into her home I must call 'Halt!', like the dragon of Alcala."

Impulsively Madame Maline stretched out her arms to embrace Maxime. She exclaimed:

"You are a dear!"

"But it is only a matter of time."

"Ah! If you had not estranged Denise, she would still have all her illusions, and would love you as before."

"In the meantime, Mother, will you follow my advice? Be patient and let me take this matter in hand. . . . Good comes out of evil."

"You are talking of Paulоче?"

"Yes—of her and of Denise's whim. . . . Let the experiment last a little longer. . . ."

"Why?"

"Because it will wear itself out. In a week or a fortnight, at the latest, Paulоче will leave her in the lurch and return to the Cassis Bar. It shall be to her interest. . . . I'll explain in a word. In this way you can get anything. . . ." He made a movement with his fingers suggestive of paying out money.

Madame Maline understood She murmured in astonishment

"Oh! And it will be you who will——"

"Hush! Leave things to Fate—and to your son in law! Pauloche will take herself off laughing, and will cock a snook at Denise, who will be disgusted to find Don Quixotism bitter and deceiving "

"And what then?"

"Why, then she will be more amenable to the reconciliation that I long for with all my heart, for I love Denise, dear Mother, and I shall win "

"Maxime! You are not such a fool, after all "

"One is liable to make mistakes But you can take it from me, that in a very short time our dear Denise will have had enough of readjusting social morals "

Madame Maline was convinced by Maxime's confidence She replied admiringly

"I can trust in you, Maxime "

Maxime got up He looked at his watch and said

"In the meantime it would be a good thing for me to have a little conversation with Pauloche Can I? Without Denise knowing, of course "

"Nothing easier—I will call her "

"Wait a minute. . . . Don't say that I am Denise's husband. Introduce me merely as a friend of the family. . . . Monsieur Raoul."

"Very well. . . . I will send her to you at once, Maxime."

Left alone in the little boudoir, Maxime rehearsed his approaching plan of campaign. He was quite sure he would succeed. There was a portrait of Denise on the mantelpiece; he took it up. He clasped the gilded frame, pressed his lips against the photograph and murmured with fervour :

"Darling little simpleton. . . . I know quite well how to win you back !"

Madame Maline had introduced them as follows :

"Monsieur Raoul, one of our great friends . . . Mademoiselle Pauloche. . . ."

Maxime and Pauloche were now *tête-à-tête*. Denise's guest had not turned a hair. In spite of the fact she had instantly recognized the night-bird who, that evening, had lured her on to this adventure, she had not shown the slightest surprise. Now that Madame Maline had gone out Maxime winked at Pauloche ironically. He chuckled :

"Ha ! ha ! What a transformation ! . . .

Mademoiselle Pauloche of the Cassis Bar performing on the tight rope of virtue! My congratulations May I be allowed to look at you a little nearer?"

He went close up and walked round Pauloche and continued his banter:

'My word! Not a speck of Rimmel on your eyelashes Not a suspicion of rouge You are playing the part well, my dear And when this little comedy is over, I advise you to enter the Conservatoire There is a dearth of good ingénues, my dear Pauloche!'

As one good joke deserves another, Pauloche smiled and in turn replied.

"Do you think so, Monsieur Lorande?"

Maxime seemed a little taken aback

"Ah! Ah! You know my name?"

"Yes, Monsieur Lorande"

"Well, as you know it, there is no sense in my denying it"

"You are the ex husband of my benefactress"

Maxime corrected her

"Excuse me, not ex—yet Between the serving of the papers and the absolute decree there is a long way to go"

"Anyway, I hope you have appreciated my discretion"

"Indeed I have. You never raised an eyebrow when we met. I tell you, Paulоче, you are a born comedienne. . . ."

Paulоче deprecated with a wave of the hand this undeserved compliment, and added modestly :

"No!—say rather, a good sport."

"Come, my dear Paulоче. . . . Minutes are precious, because my wife must not know of my visit here. . . . Let us come to the point without any delay. . . . You remember the arrangement we made at the Cassis Bar, don't you. Twenty-five louis a week if you came and played at being an honest girl in my wife's house. . . . That's five weeks ago next Saturday. . . . I shall then owe you two thousand five hundred francs, see. But I warn you, my dear little friend, that in a week's time you will have to pack your little valise, discard your garb of respectability, and begin to use your lip-stick and your beauty patches and go back to the rue Lepic. . . . The run of the play here will be over. You will take French leave, you will write her a cynical and politely worded little note that I will dictate to you. See?"

Paulоче listened to these explicit directions. She replied quietly but no less firmly :

"No, Monsieur Lorande."

Maxime, a little upset, gave an impatient shrug of the shoulders and replied

"Come, Pauloche Do not try to make me angry I have congratulated you on your performance, but I know quite well that you have had enough of being lectured by my wife, and that you are tired of tapping a type writer Do you pretend that you are not fed up so that I shall continue your little—er—sauce Is that it? You want a little extra pay before you can fall in with my wishes? Very well—after all, it is fair fighting and quite in keeping with the moral code of the Cassis Bar Bleed the fellows when you've got them Pauloche Here are your one hundred and twenty five louis, and I will give you another fifty later on "

He offered her the notes Pauloche did not move

"No thank you, Monsieur Lorande
No, thank you "

Maxime appeared stunned
"What? You refuse? "

"Yes You owe me nothing, Monsieur Lorande

"I beg your pardon! "

"I don't want your money Apparently
you don't quite understand I will explain
—it is really quite simple You have

opened up new horizons for me, and I have become acquainted with things I little dreamed of. . . . Ah! I swear to you that I am not acting a part. . . . I myself should have thought it quite impossible for me to live an honest life with respectable people; with a woman as strictly virtuous as your wife. I thought that I should have grown sick of its dullness in no time. . . . It astonishes you. . . . Why? There are some girls in my walk of life who would give a good deal to be able to earn a living in some other way than by taking men home. . . . It would be necessary to convert them slowly and gently, without frightening them with long black dresses and gloomily bound Bibles in half-calf. . . . One can train parakeets and canaries. It is not so easy to tame birds of my sort."

Pauloche stopped to see the effect of her words on Maxime. Then she continued gently:

"You know those movable stoves, Monsieur Lorande? The stoves that one shifts from one room to another as they are wanted—that's what you evidently take me for; a Venus on wheels, that you move, as you like, from a bar to a drawing-room, from the gutter to a respectable home; and send her back again to a rotten life when you have no further use for her services.

. . . You have made an error, you know. . . . Obviously you'd little idea that my conversion would be so rapid! But what do you expect! . . . Nature is a surprise packet . . . Not very long ago I used to think so every morning when I woke up with a strange man by my side. Put an angel of virtue, all of a sudden, in a gay house and, more than likely, this Saint Nitouche will in no time throw overboard everything she has adored for the last ten years. On the other hand, put a person of no importance in very correct surroundings and perhaps she will be suddenly inoculated with all the virtues. My opinion is that you can never tell how a man or a woman will behave under certain conditions. It's just like a fireworks cracker—sometimes it cracks—sometimes it doesn't . . .”

Maxime had anticipated everything except this. How could he possibly have imagined that this little light o' love would be even eager to become virtuous? That this fallen girl would be able to overcome a vice that appeared incurable? This sincere conversion upset his arrangements. He was, to tell the truth, disconsolate when he realized that, through Denise this miracle had been performed.

With his arms dangling by his side, his face,

as long as a wet week, he grumbled that he never had any luck. Thereupon Pauloché smilingly asked him :

“Why? Because the cure has succeeded?”

“It’s just my luck. I pick out a little girl haphazard, and I happen to choose one who takes the job seriously.”

“Don’t worry, Monsieur Lorandé. It is not a very grave misfortune.”

“So you may think! But all my scheme has gone to pot.”

That remark aroused Pauloché’s curiosity. She walked up to Maxime and began to question him more closely.

“You had a scheme? . . . What was it?”

“To win back my wife.”

“Monsieur Lorandé . . . if you think I am to be trusted, you can explain yourself.”

Maxime gave a dubious look, like a gambler playing his last louis.

“As things are now! . . . Listen, here is my scheme. I wanted to cure my wife of philanthropy, by making her experience with you a ghastly failure. So that, disappointed and disgusted she might, perhaps in desperation, be glad to take me back to console herself. It was simple enough, and it ought to have succeeded.”

“You are really fond of your wife?”

"More, much more than that, Paulоче"

"You worship her with all your being?"

"Yes, with my body and my soul"

"And you think that if I carried out your idea it would bring her back to you?"

"Well It stands a good chance"

Paulоче thought for a moment This adventure interested her And besides, she wanted to show her gratitude to Denise

"Listen, Monsieur Lorande I am greatly indebted both to you and to her I should be ungrateful if I did not show my appreciation by helping you as much as I can

You want me, in a week from now, to clear out of here?"

"Yes"

"Very well But instead of going back to a gay life you would not mind if I were to try to earn my living honestly, as a typist?"

"Oh, no!"

"You do not absolutely insist that I continue to sell my charms, as they say in novels?"

"Paulоче! If you are honestly converted, I should be behaving in a rotten way if I wished you to——"

"Very well! You can rely on me In a week's time, no matter what it costs, I will clear out of this house, like a graceless hussy."

without a word of thanks to your wife. That's what you want, isn't it?"

Maxime was buoyed up with hope.

"Yes. And then you will leave in your room a letter that I will dictate to you. . . ."

"On the typewriter?"

"Yes, go and fetch it."

Pauloche came back with her Remington. She sat down, her fingers in position ready to write as Maxime dictated.

"You are ready, Pauloche? . . . Good. . . . I'll begin. . . . 'Dear Madame,—Having thought things over, I find that in your house I feel like a sparrow in an aviary——'"

"In an aviary. Do you spell aviary with an 'h'?"

"No, with an 'a.'"

"It is a funny thing, but since I have become respectable I want to use h's everywhere."

"Let's get on. Write—'You have made me submit . . . to a cure which gives me the pip. . . .'"

Pauloche protested.

"No. Which gives me the pip. . . . It is more vulgar. . . . Let's get on: 'I am fed up with ping-ponging on your typewriter. Instead of rescuing girls who have done nothing to deserve it you ought to mind your own

business I've settled to go back to the Cassis Bar With no ill feeling, signed—PAULOCHÉ."

Pauloche stopped and tossed her head

"It's a bit casual, isn't it?"

Maxime was still determined

"So much the better I must sicken her of this craze, once and for all"

"Very well Your wishes shall be carried out"

Pau'oché you have a heart of gold I promise you I'll give you something, a little souvenir Would you like a ring—a pearl?"

"Do you know what I should like very much?"

"No"

"A useful present That——"

She pointed to the typewriter and added

"I should like to have one to start work with—you follow me?"

"Of course I do, Pauloche You are going to work at home"

"Yes I still have my two little rooms in the rue Duperre It will be my office"

"And I will get you customers Splendid But I'd better clear off, it's wiser—because of Denise I can trust you, Pauloche"

"You can rely on me, Monsieur Lorande"

And they shook hands like a couple of men sealing a pact of honour

It was five o'clock. Pauloche was busy at work in the *salon*. Copying further solemn pages upon the evolution of Society, she was still thinking about Maxime, who had wisely made himself scarce. Suddenly two perfumed hands were placed upon her shoulders. She turned round and smiled at Denise who apologized.

"Am I disturbing you, my dear Pauloche? You are working?"

"Yes and no . . . Madame. . . ."

"How industrious you are, and how serious. I can't get over it."

"Really!"

"I never should have imagined that you would profit in such a short time by my advice. . . . It seems like a miracle."

"No. It is perhaps because I was not absolutely hopeless. . . ."

Denise seemed to be in unusually good spirits. She led Pauloche to her footstool and made her sit beside her between two mushrooms in black and gold velvet. She said:

"Pauloche—I am going to speak to you very freely. . . . It seems to me that really this cure . . . must have been a great effort on your part. Because it must be delightful to be free, free as the air—to live from day to day. . . ."

Pauloche corrected her

"From day to night"

"To experience new adventures . . . You know, I have been very interested in what you have told me during our little *tête-à-tête* every night. You have revealed a kind of life to me that I knew nothing about, a new world that I was not aware of."

"A pretty sort of a world!"

Denise rose, getting more and more excited. She picked up a cigarette from a sandalwood box with her monogram on it, and replied.

"Not exactly pretty, but picturesque and rather attractive, like everything else that is not very correct. A fag, Pauloche?"

"No, thank you. I don't smoke any more."

Pauloche's reserved manner contrasted strongly with the somewhat vulgar attitude of Denise, who was sitting on the edge of the table.

It would have been remarkable to a moralist if he had not known the circumstances. None would have guessed that the little person in black, so correct in her style, was the courtesan of yesterday, while this mannish lady who was smoking, with her legs crossed in a free and-easy manner, was, and always had been, a highly respectable married woman.

Denise flicked, with a flip of her first finger, her cigarette ash into a brass bowl beside her and said :

"Paulo—I expect you will laugh."

"Why?"

"I expect you will laugh when I tell you what comes into the mind of a well-brought-up lady."

Denise stopped dead for a minute, and then boldly asked :

"Do you think I should do for a *grue*—a passable one?"

Pauloche burst into laughter.

"What a question! . . . Oh, Madame Lorande!"

"Seriously. Do you think that I should have been the sort of woman to attract men? In fact, do you think that I should have caught any mugs?"

"Oh!"

"That's the right word, isn't it? . . ."

"The business is overcrowded, Madame Lorande."

"However, I am not *too* ugly?"

"No.. On the contrary you are pretty, but that means nothing. There are some women who are quite ugly who do fine business every night. . . . It is not enough to be just pretty. It is necessary to know your job."

"How? Explain yourself, Pauloche
I am interested"

"You've got to have the flair, the tact
You must know what men like For example
if you are accosted by a sentimental man,
puffed up with illusions, first drop a discreet
tear, a mother in hospital, a consumptive little
sister Play the 'Clair de lune' of
Werther until the fellow forks out for a nicely
enamelled bedroom suite, or pays your rent
a month in advance If, on the other
hand, he is a degenerate who is looking for
sensations trot out the cod drugs A pinch
of cerebos sniffed gently up the nose, or a little
Vittel syringed into the thigh Then the
fellow between a couple of pipes of opium (a
little virginia tobacco mixed with apricot jam)
will write you a cheque and give you a pearl
necklace gurgling that life is a dream
That's the way to succeed in the business!"

Denise listened attentively She puffed
a little smoke towards the electrolier

"Yes—yes—I follow you In fact, it
is not very easy"

'Madame Lorande if it was so very easy,
do you think there would be any respectable
women at all? But you have not any idea
of risking——'

Denise began to laugh

"Ah, no! I am speaking to you jokingly. . . . I am interviewing you because you are, in fact, a specialist. You have learnt to say I love you in every language."

"Yes. . . . *Je t'aime. . . . Ich liebe dich. . . . Io te quiero. . . . Ia wass loublou.*"

"It is marvellous. . . . But for all that you have really been in love—you have admitted it."

At this remark Pauloche shut her eyes and sighed.

"Yes, little Leo."

And Denise repeated:

"Little Leo. . . ."

She gazed at her tiny feet shod in grey buckskin shoes, and added in an undertone:

"Alas! We all have a little Leo in our lives."

The tone of Denise's voice struck Pauloche, who went up to her and looked into her face.

"Why do you say that? . . . You haven't got the blues, have you?"

"The blues, no. . . ."

"Your husband? . . . You are thinking of him, I'm sure."

"Well . . . to be quite truthful it does concern my husband!"

Denise took Pauloche's arm and asked her:

"Tell me, Pauloche. What do you think of Loulou?"

"Monsieur Méridien? From what point of view?"

"Do you think he would be a good lover—an ardent one?"

"I don't know. I have not taken his temperature."

"But you know how to judge men?"

"I don't judge any more. Now, I find them guilty without any extenuating circumstances."

"Do not joke, Pauloche. It is very serious."

You see—I am going to take you into my confidence and lay bare my heart to you.

Will you believe me if I confess that you have—how shall I put it?—well—familiarized me with love? I don't know if the atmosphere that you have brought with you is contagious, but as for myself, who thought nothing about it at the time, I now look upon it quite openly, and no longer regard a momentary attachment as a serious affair. So, having Loulou ready to hand, I said to myself: After all, he is quite nice. Why not with him?"

Pauloche did not answer. She seemed to read, quite easily, the mind of this honest bourgeoisie.

"Isn't he? He is a nice boy," continued Denise. "A little five to seven o'clock with him every now and then would have its good

points. I have been wrong to make such a fuss about a perfectly natural thing which has no more importance than sipping a cocktail before dinner."

"Has he paid court to you for some time?"

"He has paid me attention ever since my husband deceived me. He is awaiting his opportunity. He expects that I shall finish up by accepting a small port . . . and falling into his arms."

"And he has not yet offered you the port?"

"No—because of——"

Denise hesitated. Pauloche completed the sentence for her.

"Of your scruples?"

Denise dropped her head. She was a little ashamed of her confession. However, she whispered:

"No . . . of his bachelor flat, which I could not stand. I don't want to be a *figurante*, one of the crowd, another addition to the list. And, as I have a strong objection to going to an hotel, I said to myself I will speak to Pauloche about it. She, with all her experience, will help me out."

Pauloche's astonishment was not assumed; it was real. She repeated:

"Help you out of your difficulty? I ask

nothing better But if the bachelor flat and the hotel disgust you, I can only suggest the railway arches, the telephone boxes or the catacombs "

"My dear Pauloche! You told me, I believe, that you had rooms in Montmartre "

"I should not dare to offer them to you. They are too humble—so small—two poorly furnished rooms 104 rue Duperré, on the fifth floor at the back of the courtyard "

But Denise had seized Pauloche's hand She interrupted

"That's of no consequence—one can arrange all that Tell me—could you manage Wednesday afternoon next week? "

"How can I refuse you a little thing like that, you—my benefactress! "

Denise got up She felt rather relieved at having unburdened herself

"Don't breathe a word! I am a woman just like all others I will warn Loulou

You said 104 rue Duperré On the fifth floor at the back of the court Is there a bell? "

'No, a knocker and a step down "

"A step down! Most appropriate After a double knock the honest lady falls down a step! "

Thereupon she embraced Pauloche and ended up by saying :

"Thank you, Pauloche, I'm just off to whisper the good news into Loulou's ear. . . ."

The disappearance of Pauloche had given rise to many remarks in the district between the fountain in the Place Pigalle and the cracked old walls of the Montmartre cemetery. During the hours of relaxation, during the hours when Eros puts his bow and arrows in the cloak-room, the little "birds" of the rue Lepic and the "butterflies" of the rue Victor Massé discussed her case. Lily and Fernande had spread the news all round. Their story, carried from mouth to mouth, had assumed the importance of a tale out of the Arabian Nights. One beautiful evening a young princess, accompanied by the Queen-Mother incognito, had stood champagne to all Père Cassis's customers. A Lord High Chamberlain had drawn by lot the name of one of the girls who frequented the bar, and who had thereby become a lady-in-waiting at the court of this mysterious sovereign. Pauloche had drawn the lucky number. She had started off straight away, and since that fatidical evening no one had heard another word about her. Was she engaged to read *La Vie Parisienne* to the Queen of —? Did

she try on the state robes of the Queen of Spain? Did she make the fourth at Bridge at the Court of Holland? All these suggestions were put forward

Lily herself, her great friend, her neighbour in the rue Duperré, knew nothing

One evening however, Lily, perched on her stool, remarked to Cassis

"I say, don't you think it odd, this joke of Pauloche's?"

"Yes"

"The kid might have given us some sign that she is still in the land of the living"

"You are itching to see her?"

"My hat, yes I am crazy to know what she is doing with her ten fingers"

"That perhaps would not be very difficult"

"The smart young blood who used to come so often would have been able to tell me But, worse luck, I never see him these days"

"Loulou Meridien? He has no one to meet him here now Half a minute, I'll

try and remember her name—she was called—what was it now? A name with an ending something like almond It began with L—

Lemonde—Lomond—Labande Ah! I've got it—Lorande! Madame Lorande You ought to be able to turn it up in 'Tout-Paris'

Lily rushed to the Directory She read:

"Lorande (Gustave-Adolphe), General—retired, 10 Git-le-Cœur."

"That's not it—go on."

"Lorande (M. and Mme. Maxime), 166 Quai de Passy—Second Thursday."

Lily looked perplexed.

"What's that mean, 'second Thursday'? The day she does her washing?"

"That's her 'At Home' day. Lord! You're dumb, my girl!"

"And this little spot after the address, what's that stand for?"

Old Cassis bent forward and shrugged his shoulders.

"That indicates that he owns a car. Lily, you're an ignorant little pig!"

"You're funny, I don't think! . . . Everybody doesn't know the twiggly-bits of these Society nobs. So you think that Paulоче would be with them?"

"Most probably. If you want to make sure, you've no need to be a magician. Just go and see."

"Cassis, I will act on your advice to-morrow afternoon."

Henriette again interrupted Paulоче's work.

"Mademoiselle—someone has called—a lady is asking to see you."

"Who is it?"

"She did not give me her name"

"Show her in"

Lily rushed into the *salon*, her arms out stretched, her bag in her hand, and her black hat pulled well over her eyes

"It's me, my dear"

Pauloche got up amazed

"You, Lily—well—I never expected you!"

"Listen, Pauloche, this couldn't go on Over at the Cassis Bar everybody is clamouring for you, a regular hue and cry But Cassis told me that you were shut up in a swagger tart's house, 166 Quai de Passy So I made no bones about it, I just decided to come and see you Are you really a prisoner with these bourgeois people, you poor kid?"

Pauloche was amused at the pity expressed in her friend's face

"A willing prisoner Yes"

"All rot apart, what's it like here?"

Lily inspected the *salon* She felt the velvet cushions with an expert's touch She jiggled three or four times up and down on the sofa to test the strength of the springs She looked at a marble Siren on the mantelpiece, and tickled it under the arms with supreme irreverence She ran her fingers over the keys of the grand piano, made the piano stool squeak by

spinning it round very quickly, and sneaked a bon-bon from an old Saxe bowl. Then, perfectly satisfied, she threw herself down in an armchair, crunched a peppermint cream between her teeth, and repeated :

"It is certainly posh. . . . If I had cushions like this I should put up my price fifty per cent. . . ."

Then, suddenly becoming serious, she asked :

"As a matter of fact, what do you do here?"

Pauloche, who had been watching her good-humouredly, walked up to her and very mysteriously, in a low voice, replied :

"I am building up a new life."

Lily did not understand. She hazarded :

"You've hooked on to an old man?"

"No, I have given up the business. . . . I have retired, that's all."

Very surprised, Lily inquired, still unconvinced :

"You are giving us the go-by? . . ."

"Yes. I have found out that picking up boys does not bring happiness. Men disgust me. So I have thrown away my uniform, or rather my eiderdown."

Lily gave a look of alarm. She went and took a bon-bon and exclaimed :

"Ah! So that's it. . . . You're up to the

neck in parsons and psalm singers I bet
you're going into a convent!"

"No, not quite that, Lily! Simply
this, I want to become a respectable girl .
That's all"

"What! What do you say?"

"Yes A respectable girl who earns her
living by work, who owes no one anything, and
who has the right of sleeping every night in her
bed alone"

Lily's astonishment knew no bounds She
was silent for an instant and then said simply .

"Well I'm damned"

' You look as if you'd just dropped from the
moon "

"No, joke apart! Do you really mean to
work?"

Pauloche pointed to her typewriter

"Yes—you see"

"Typist? Why, you've knocked me all of a
heap How quickly bad luck overtakes one—
and you a real good sport—there—you who
never stuck at anything Oh, Pauloche!
You don't know how I feel . Honour
bright When I think about it! The games
we used to have together . . . Why, only last
Saturday I saw that fellow who left his teeth
under your clock And then, do you
remember the old cove that we sneaked from

Fernande, the one who put a metronome on the table by the bed. . . . Ah, well, he is dead. . . . And then little Bobby? He's married. . . . And then the great big Theo—he doesn't care for women these days. And the fat Celestin? He got pinched at the Casino at Vichy."

Pauloche listened unmoved to this recital of the good old times—she trembled.

"Let's forget the past, Lily. . . ."

"Is it a fact that men disgust you?"

"Quite right!"

"At heart I am very nearly of your opinion. But what do you expect. As Fernande says, some are better than others, like the ladies' work-boxes. . . . All the same I came to cheer you up, Pauloche. . . . I've brought you this—in case you should have need of it. . . ."

Discreetly she put a little round box upon the table. Pauloche said:

"Sniffs?"

"Yes."

"No, thank you—that's all over. No more poisons—no cocaine, no cigarettes, no more crushes on fellows."

Then Lily, enlightened, tossed her head and concluded sententiously:

"Very well, old sport, you'll end up like a mantelpiece ornament under a glass case."

The *salon* door opened gently Monsieur Maline's pink, bald head, monocle and little white moustache appeared. He was looking for his wife Lily, who turned round, nudged Pauloche's elbow and whispered

'Who's the old boy?'

"My benefactress's father"

"Introduce me"

Pauloche made no objection. She said to the old beau

'Monsieur Madame Maline is not here. Are you looking for her?'

But Monsieur Maline had already focused his eyeglass on Lily. He immediately gave vent to an admiring "Ha! ha!" Pauloche saw her opportunity

"Let me introduce you to my friend Lily who has come to get some news about me"

Lily thereupon stretched out her hand to Monsieur Maline who grasped it cordially

"Charmed, Mademoiselle. I am always charmed to meet a pretty woman. Ho! ho!"

'She is delicious, your friend. The very picture of a little girl of mine that I knew in 1884 called Josette. Wait half a minute now."

He took the little green notebook from his

pocket and turned over the pages carefully while Pauloche explained to her friend:

"Monsieur Maline has catalogued his adventures in that pocket-book."

Lily thought it a very funny idea. Then, because she always wanted to know where she stood, she murmured:

"Has he got any dough?"

Pauloche replied with an affirmative nod of the head.

"Then that's all right . . ." concluded Lily. "Let me see, Monsieur? Let me see that little pocket-book?"

"Here you are—see . . . 1884—Josette—42."

Pauloche thought it was necessary to translate these sibylline signs.

"That was the size of her waist."

"No—42, that is the size of her shoes," Monsieur Maline corrected. "She had very large feet, but a very pretty little nose! . . . And where do you reside, Mademoiselle Lily?"

"In the rue Duperré; M'sieur. . . . I am next door neighbour to Pauloche, on the same landing."

"But how delightful. . . . Two pretty linnets on the same perch. What do you do for a living, Mademoiselle Lily?"

"I make love, M'sieur "

"Ah! that is still more charming And who taught you?"

"Nobody, I taught myself . and I didn't want a dictionary "

Lily bent over to Pauloché and suggested

"Just leave me alone for a few minutes, will you?"

Pauloché hesitated Then she thought to herself that, after all, she was not this old Don Juan's guardian, and giving some casual excuse, she made herself scarce

Lily and Monsieur Maline were left alone He was delighted He smiled admiringly at Lily He discovered a thousand seductions in this attractive little person who had, so to speak suddenly fallen from the sky into his daughter's austere *salon* He took three steps up to Lily and exclaimed

"Mademoiselle—you appeal to me enormously "

"That's funny, I was just going to say the same thing You know, I either take to a person straight away or I've had enough of them in two ticks When you came in I said to myself 'Here's an old boy, but I'll bet he's quite amusing' "

Monsieur Maline preened himself

"You flatter me! "

"No, I know what I'm talking about."

"What a pity I did not meet you sooner."

"Why—it is never too late to go wrong."

"Ho! ho! Mademoiselle Lily, if you talk like that . . . Wait a bit. . . ."

He went to the door, opened it, peeped out and shut it again.

Lily was intrigued by this performance.

"What's all that about?"

"The fact is, that Rosemonde has a nasty trick of keeping a watch on me, like a child," Monsieur Maline whispered, as he bent over the keyhole.

"Now what are you doing?"

"I'm blocking up the keyhole with the cotton-wool out of my ear."

"Who is Rosemonde?"

"My wife."

"She is a cat?"

"Mademoiselle Lily, have you ever tasted rat poison—cyanide of potassium—vomito negro?"

"Why?"

"Because they are sweet tasting morsels compared with my wife. . . . But now we have the chance. . . . Time is precious. Lily—listen to me. . . ."

He was sitting beside Lily. He took her hands and squeezed them so as to emphasize

better the definite proposals that he was about to make Lily, on her part, without making any effort to take them away, trembled with emotion and sighed deeply

"Aaaah! Monsieur! Do not squeeze me like that My God, what have you done to affect me like this? It is foolish!"

"I want to see you again, Lily Where? When?"

I I don't know Ah! It is unkind of you to make such wicked use of your power,

Monsieur Maline insisted He wriggled like an old roach caught in a net

When shall we be foolish? To morrow? The day after to morrow?"

"Oh!

"Am I too hasty? Have I offended you? Oh! Lily!"

But he had not offended Lily, because as she lowered her eyes she suggested

'This evening'

"Yes but not too late Rosemonde goes for me if I'm after eleven o'clock Now where? Where will the little secret nest be?"

Lily murmured

"104 rue Duperré

Door No 8'

Fifth on the left

Monsieur Maline wrote in his notebook.

"104 rue Duperré—fifth floor left—No. 8—at nine o'clock?"

"Yes. Ah! You do what you like with me!"

"Must I say your name to the concierge?"

Lily grasped her neighbour's wrist and concluded in a whisper:

"She doesn't worry."

Monsieur Maline seemed to have reached the limits of extreme felicity. This adventure, fixed up in a twinkling, reminded him of times long ago when all he had to do was to come, to see, and to conquer. He put his arms behind his back and skipped around, he patted Pauloche's typewriter, the indirect cause of his good luck, but stopped short at a little round box that Lily had put on the rosewood table. . . .

He gazed at the thing, took off the lid, touched the white powder and asked:

"What is it? Menthol for a cold?"

"Cocaine. . . . It is mine."

"You take it? . . . It's poison."

"Not it. Taste it. . . . It will give you new ideas."

Monsieur Maline shook his head. He replied gallantly:

"No, thank you. . . . You are my artificial paradise, Lily."

"Yes . yes . just to please me,"
Lily insisted

Monsieur Maline could never say no to a woman. He opened the box again and smilingly asked

'Do you have to sniff it? On a bit of paper? With a teaspoon?'

"Between your thumb and first finger
See!'

Lily took a pinch of the prohibited powder and putting it under her admirer's nose, she ordered him

"Sniff—hard! "

Monsieur Maline sniffed—and sneezed

"Once more—there can you feel
it?"

"It tickles me It feels cold in my
nose "

"You wait and see In five minutes
you will think you are another man "

'Ha! ha! Then that won't be so
bad '

They went on chatting. Lily enjoyed initiating this honourable Don Juan to the seductions of "snow." She explained to him the delights he would experience from the drug

"With me it has an amazing effect .
When I take it I don't realize that I have any

feet . . . and I fancy that I have a large hole in the middle of my body. . . . I can feel the air pass through it. . . . Other times I think I'm walking on cotton-wool with a head like a bubble and hands like lead."

Monsieur Maline listened in astonishment. He was leaning against the back of a chair awaiting the promised vertigo.

"It is strange. . . . Oh, I say. . . . Oh, my ears feel like sponges. . . . I say . . . is there anything funny about my ears?"

Lily teased him. She watched him like a jocular medical student studying the effect of a spoonful of spirit absorbed by a guinea pig. All of a sudden Monsieur Maline got up and said:

"Oh! But it is very peculiar. . . . Oh! I seem at least twenty years younger. . . . I feel quite light. . . . I want to fly . . . to glide. . . . I can fly the hurdles. . . . Put some chairs here. . . . Now you'll see. . . . I swear that I feel twenty years younger at least!"

He appeared, in fact, to be metamorphosed. The intoxication of the cocaine gave him an unaccountable vigour. Merrily and eagerly he placed the chairs like a runner places the hurdles for a hundred and twenty yards Olympic race and cleared the first one with

the grace of a highly trained Finn Lily laughed heartily and encouraged him, calling out

"Go on! Go on! One more——"

"Sigismond!"

The ejaculation of Madame Maline, at the window leading to the garden, put an end to the enthusiasm of the hurdler, and silenced the abashed Lily. Monsieur Maline with great volubility explained the whole thing to his wife

"You see, my dear I have mastered weight I can ignore the universal law of gravity and of relativity of space I can laugh at Newton and at centrifugal force"

But Madame Maline treated Newton with supreme contempt. She replied icily

"Sigismond! You have gone out of your mind. You had better present me to Madame——"

"By all means, Rosemonde Mademoiselle Lily—one of Pauloche's friends—Madame Maline, my wife"

Denise's mother gave Lily a stern look. Lily thought it prudent to explain her presence. She declared very politely

"Madame I beg your pardon . . ."

I came to get news of my old friend Paulоче. . . .”

“You have done quite right. . . . Mademoiselle Paulоче is making herself quite as at home here as if the house belonged to her! . . .”

Lily did not realize the irony of this remark. Nor Monsieur Maline either, because he was in such a happy condition that he was quite impervious to his wife’s annoyance. He showed it also when she called upon him to tell her what had put him into such a condition. With the air of an inspired fakir he exclaimed:

“Why, I am in a most beautiful condition, my dear. I am swimming. . . . I assure you that I gyrate in the starry ether.”

His first trip to the artificial paradise was unhappily fated to be spoilt by Reality, that tiresome and omnipotent fairy who so often spoils our sport when we try to take our fill of happiness. Henriette came running across the small garden. Out of breath and very perturbed she called out:

“Madame! . . . Where is Madame Lorande? . . .”

“She is not here,” replied Madame Maline.
“Don’t interrupt us. . . .”

But Henriette insisted:

“Ah, Madame! . . . It is about the lost

little boy "you know whom I mean,
Madame?"

"What lost little boy?"

"The little boy that Madame brought here
a little while ago"

"Oh, yes The little idiot? Well, what
about him?"

Hearing this excited conversation, Denise
and Loulou Méridien ran in Henriette
addressed them, hoping that they would be
more interested

"Madame! Madame's lost little boy
Oh!"

Denise did not understand

"Well, well! What's he done?"

Henriette swallowed her saliva and hurriedly
spluttered out

"He has taken the silver teaspoons and
Madame's hand bag And now he has
vanished "

"What? What do you say? "

"Yes, Madame He made off while I
went to fetch some jam from the pantry"

Everyone in the room was dumbfounded
Madame Maline threw her arms up in the
air Her husband laughed immoderately
and let his eyeglass fall among the sofa
cushions Denise, who was on the point of
tears, took Loulou Méridien into her con

fidence. All of a sudden he tapped his forehead and exclaimed :

" Ah ! I bet it's the same ! "

" What do you mean ? The same ? " inquired Denise.

Loulou Méridien took an evening paper from his pocket.

" Listen to this in the ' Latest News ' column. "

He read the following lines while the worthy Don Juan pressed his epigastrium with both hands to suppress his increasing hilarity.

" ' A little boy of six years old, trained by his father, a hardened criminal and an old offender, manages to gain admittance into flats by pretending that he is a lost child. By this means he is able to lay his hands on anything of value. Many complaints have been received. An inquiry has been instituted. ' "

III

SOME psychologists, experts on female mentality, have asked if it is possible to measure accurately the honesty of an honest woman. I suppose a voltmeter has never been made that can measure the potential virtue that each and every woman conceals in her being, nor a reactive one that will reveal the effect of temptation upon her conscience. The atoms and their near relations, the ions, will doubtless deliver up the secret of their composition before they will be able to establish the law of gravitation that attracts women to bachelor flats. No psychologist could possibly have predicted that one day Denise Lorande, irreproachable wife, would have gone to the rue Duperre in order to taste the thrill of an adventure. Denise herself would probably never have believed it. So true is it that Eros proposes and woman dares.

This Wednesday after lunch, Pauloche went up the somewhat dark stairs followed by her friend Lily. They were each carrying a

number of parcels. Pauloche went into her rooms that she had left for more than a month and opened the shutters while Lily put the parcels on the table.

It was not very luxurious, this little room that led into the bedroom, although the occupant honoured it with the name of boudoir. It was furnished with a sofa covered with oriental tapestry that had never known a further longitude than the Place Clichy; a table and two dusty armchairs, a dowdy screen, a pouf flattened down by the weight of shame, and a chest of drawers in Nile green lacquer. The walls were adorned with the same eclecticism. There were pictures cut out of the illustrated papers and photographs of American stars. Here and there, an old relic of a fancy-dress ball was hung up, a paper sun given by the *Abbaye* on a gala night, or a burlesque doll distributed at the *Perroquet*.

Pauloche turned to her companion and remarked :

"Five floors takes it out of you when you are not used to it."

Lily turned her nose right and left; she replied :

"I say, your rooms seem stuffy. Let's open the window a little."

"My word, it's more than a month since I

was here And do you think that the concierge
has soiled her hands by touching my broom?"

She opened the window and exclaimed
"What a lovely sun Hurrah for the

Spring!"

"No! Down with the Spring!"

"Why?"

"It makes me amorous And when I'm
like that I let myself go without thinking what
I'm doing And then I get disgusted

I say, Pauloche, what is all this mystery
about? Won't you explain it to me?"

'Wait a little First get rid of your
parcels my dear You see this room,
Lily Well this afternoon I've let it or
rather I've sub let it "

She had taken two lovely bouquets of
flowers out of their tissue paper horns, and
she began to arrange them in the vases

Lily continued watching her do it without
understanding what it was all about She
had helped her friend up the stairs with her
parcels, but she did not know that Pauloche's
little nest was destined to day to be the scene
of portentous adventures

Growing very interested, she inquired

"Ah! You have done a deal?"

Pauloche shook her head

"Not for money, but to do a good turn to

a woman who has done more for me than you can imagine. You do not get me? . . . Listen. . . . I am going to lend my caboodle . . . this little room and my bedroom next door to Madame Lorande, my benefactress."

"Ah! The swagger tart at the Quai de Passy? The one who has forced her ideas on to you?"

Pauloche nodded her head smilingly.

"That's the one."

"What does she want your room for?"

"To play at pigeon-stealing, of course!"

Lily raised her eyebrows slant-wise under her hat.

"No! Really! Your Society lady is having a game on the quiet?"

"Yes."

"Ah! But that is most interesting. What is he like?"

"Who do you mean?"

"Her Romeo?"

"A nice boy—rather chocolate-boxy—you know, the handsome, fair young man who bends over a young girl and sighs to her with his hands in a supplicating attitude: 'Listen, my darling, it is Love who is speaking to you. . . .'"

"And you have offered them your rooms?"

"No. It was she who begged me to find

her a discreet bolt hole Because, you see, as she is on the point of getting a divorce, she must not do anything that will come to light "

Lily was hardly able to believe her ears
" Oh! What an adventure! Your room is going to be honoured by Society people To me that would be a wonderful experience "

Pauloche had arranged her roses and her pinks She stood back towards the window and said

" Look—with the flowers that she has ordered that is better still "

But Lily who never lost the practical point of view, gave her good advice and said

" I say—oughtn't you to turn the pillow slip inside out? "

" That can be done in five minutes Now will you open your parcels? "

Lily did so

" There—there are the cakes It is astonishing how many cakes get forgotten on bachelors' little tables "

She unwrapped a bottle

" There you are White wine? No, old port Naturally "

Pauloche cut the string of another parcel and said

" Here are the cigarettes "

"And that?" said Lily. "Hello—a book." She looked at the binding.

"‘The Infanta’s Garden. . . . Poems of Albert Samain. . . .’ Good Lord—it is in verse. . . . Ah! I see. It is necessary to have a little vice as well. It reminds me of a *type* I made the acquaintance of last winter at the Caveau Caucasien, a country-bred man who was a teacher at a college at Rôanne. . . . I had to read fifteen or twenty pages of de Musset to get him into the right mood."

"Used you to read the ‘Nuits’?"

"No, not the nights, it was in the afternoon. I remember that there was a story of a pelican who went on a journey, and of a poet who did some funny business to his muse with a lute. . . ."

She opened the first page of the book and read in a loud voice:

"‘My soul is an Infanta in a robe of State. . . .’ Oh, well, if it is not more exciting than that you’ll find them asleep to-morrow morning."

But Pauloche had already gone into the bedroom. Lily called out through the open door:

"Can I help you?"

"No, thanks."

"Put the Poems on the table by the bed."

"There is a table with a water-bottle on it"
 Lily brought the Poems

"Now—'The Poems of the Infanta'"

She came back again, and catching sight
 of the bottle, exclaimed

"I want to draw the port Have you a
 corkscrew?"

'It is under the sofa cushion on the left"

'You hide it, do you?"

"On account of my concierge—she drinks
 like a fish"

Pauloche came back into the room

"I say, Lily—you have not told me all
 about your adventure?"

"Which?"

"The one with Monsieur Maline"

"With Gigi"

"Why Gigi?"

"Of course—Sigmund, that makes Gigi
 for a pet name My word, I'm going
 great, my dear I've bewitched the old
 dodderer"

"Have you given him an appointment for
 five o'clock to day? As I told you to do . . ."

"Yes"

'Has he already been to see you at your
 rooms?"

"Rather! Friday for the first time—from
 nine to eleven"

"So . . . now you are immortalized in the little notebook. . . ."

"Not yet. Friday was a little preliminary canter. . . . The great steeple-chase will be this afternoon. . . . Will you back Sigismond for a win or a place?"

"You are naughty. Now, Lily, go back to your abode and leave me alone. . . . It is advisable that my turtle doves should not see anybody here. . . . Off you go and look after Sigismond."

Lily disappeared like a frightened sparrow. Her home consisted of a single room, in which the furniture was as like Pauloche's as a twin brother. The same sort of chest of drawers in poplar wood enamelled in Nile green, with the same sort of vase on it, bought wholesale in the rue de Paradise, and the same kind of faded cushions thrown on the couch whose springs creaked whenever two were sitting side by side on them.

Lily, in her turn, tidied up her nest. She burnt a little Armenian paper. She punched out the flattened cushions. She hid away, in the chest of drawers, an old mauve peignoir which she wore when she went down in the morning to have her nails manicured at the hairdresser's opposite. She straightened the frame of the review of troops at Chalons before

Felix Faure and Russian royalties. She powdered herself with geranium powder No 00 and waited for Monsieur Maline

The little bell sounded in Pauloche's tiny entrance hall. Monsieur Loulou Méridien appeared. Or, to be more precise, an enormous bouquet wrapped in tissue-paper appeared first, followed by several large parcels and last of all came the elegant silhouette of the lover presumptive.

He was attired even more scrupulously than usual. A soft white silk shirt with purple spots, a knitted black silk tie striped with Bordeaux stripes, a brown, autumn-leaf coloured suit and shoes to match with khaki socks with yellow clocks. He would have given points to a dummy in a Bond Street tailor's window.

He put down his parcels, shook Pauloche by the hand and whispered, his eyes glancing towards the door of the bedroom/which was half open.

"She has not come yet?"

"No—but you are disguised like a furniture van without any name on it."

"Pauloche—help me quickly. . . . Before she comes. . . . Put these flowers in a vase. . . . Hello, there are some already! . . ."

He was astonished to see the roses and the pinks. Pauloche explained.

"She told me to decorate your retreat."

"Oh! The same thought. . . . How charming. . . ."

"And these parcels?"

"Ah! an idea of mine. Here are, first of all, the *petits fours*. . . ."

He was surprised to see other *petits fours* on a little dish.

"She has too," remarked Pauloche simply.

"I tell you we were made for one another. . . . The same thoughts and the twin *petits fours*. . . . And now the cigarettes. . . ."

Pauloche handed him the box filled.

"And cigarettes as well—see."

"So she has. . . . How perfectly charming. These coincidences augur well. . . ."

Pauloche cut the string of his last parcel and called out, laughing:

"A book, I bet!"

"Yes, some poems. . . . 'Les Nevroses' of Rollinat."

"Here are Samain's poems. . . ."

"Oh! It is absurd! . . . Without speaking about it to one another, she and I—see! Do you believe in telepathy, Pauloche?"

"In what?"

"Telepathy. It is a kind of wireless

between the minds You think of someone
At the self same instant he thinks of
you "

Pauloche joked

' Ah, well—suppose, the day before my
rents due, I think of my landlord, do
you think he'll let me off my rent if I
do? "

' Oh! Don't disbelieve in telepathy and
suggestion. They really exist. I knew that
Denise would end up by saying yes. My
insistence has forced her until she consented
to come here "

He shot his cuffs, loosened his collar,
smoothed his hair, looked round the room,
and said out of politeness

" It is pretty, this place of yours "

' Very simple—just furnished rooms "

Meridien stood stock still, like a general
studying a field of battle, and said

" Wait a minute until I arrange this like my
place "

' Why like your place? "

" Because it is easier for me In love
it is exactly the same as on the stage, the
setting is important For example, in my
room the sofa is on the left when you come
in. So, without thinking, I guide my little
friends towards the left. Here it is on the

right—and one might knock up against this little table. . . .”

He took up the little table and put it in front of the fire-place. Then he turned towards the sofa and took stock of its length and its size. He took up a cushion and measured about a yard from the extreme left of the couch, and put the cushion on the floor.

Pauloche watched his proceedings with curiosity.

“What are you measuring?”

“The exact place of the cushion. . . . Denise will sit there . . . I shall be here. . . . I shall let myself fall at her knees, and I shall speak looking up to her from below. . . . That’s it—a little more to the left. . . . No, it was all right—that’s better.”

Pauloche thought him funny. She said:

“You have a mania?”

He corrected her.

“No, I am methodical.”

He turned to the right.

“Ah! That’s a nuisance!”

“What is?”

“There’s a glass over there.”

“What of that?”

“Why, from her place, she can see herself in the mirror. . . . That will never do. . . . There! I can see myself entirely. . . . That’s

bad When a woman is about to fall she
ought not to see herself Put these
flowers in front Thank you, Pauloche Ah,
sacrebleu! "

'What now?'

The light Disastrous! Fatal! "

"What light?"

'The cold daylight from the window falls
exactly on the spot she will occupy . When
a woman is about to give way she does not like
too much light Pauloche, be a good girl
Draw this curtain on the right A little more

The daylight blinds me Not quite
so much She won't see me No, that's
not right—wait until I put back the cushion
There! If she sits here the light is
perfect "

He seemed quite satisfied But, all of a
sudden, he exclaimed

"Oh! My God!"

"You frighten me!"

"Now she will see herself in the glass .
Pauloche be a dear—the flowers a little more to
the left There! Don't move them any more "

He kn't his brows, turning to the right,
screwed up his eyes, and finished up

"Excellent Perfect "

"No! You are not a lover, you are a
surveyor! "

"Don't joke, Paulоче. . . . In affairs of this sort every little detail is important. One can lose a woman for a trifle, for a tiny slip, for an absurd little impediment. . . . For example, one day, in a room at some hotel or another where I had gone with a little friend who was on the point of capitulating, all failed because of a silly little hitch. The wash-basin tap kept on gurgling in such a comic way that it made my little friend laugh. . . . I was forced to stop the tap with my hand so as to be able to tell her how much I loved her. And just at the moment when she was beginning to listen seriously the pressure suddenly changed and I was soaked by a shower of water. She was overcome by a fit of laughter, and we made no more love."

"You won't hear any comic gurgle here, Monsieur Méridien."

"One thing more. Is the bedroom there?"

"Yes."

"Will you allow me?"

He stopped in the doorway.

"I want to get the topography in my mind's eye. . . . The bed—quite low. . . . Very good. . . . Oh! . . . I beg of you. . . . Hide this commode—a piece of furniture like that and its prosaic contents put an end to any flights towards the ideal. . . . There—

hide it in the corner Ah! My God!

The slippers under the bed—slippers are to love what phylloxera is to the vine—thank you, Pauloche”

Pauloche had carried out his instructions implicitly. She inquired

“Is that all?”

“Yes”

“Then I will give you Madame Lorande’s message. Can’t you guess? Now is the moment to make your telepathy machine work. Ah, well—can’t you guess?”

‘A message?’ You make me nervous,
Pauloche ”

“She has altered the time of the appointment—or rather she begged me to tell you that she would expect you at five thirty at the dispensary in the fifteenth *arrondissement*”

Loulou Meridien seemed very disappointed

“What! To day—she chose this day of days to go and waste her time at dispensaries
Oh!”

But Pauloche became more insistent

“Do not wait a second, Monsieur Meridien, jump into a taxi. Meet her in the rue de la Convention and take her home”

“Women are really most surprisingly

illogical. The very day when she should be doing something naughty in the eighteenth she goes and does something good in the fifteenth. I'll push on. . . ."

"It is to salve her conscience. . . . Maybe she will have a fit of remorse later on——"

The handsome Loulou Méridien turned, his hand on the door handle.

"As for me, Pauloche, I am not leaving with remorse, but with regrets."

And with that remark he went off.

Pauloche shrugged her shoulders; she could not help bursting into laughter. "This five to seven o'clock virtuoso is not a comedian—he's a clown."

The little bell rang again. Pauloche thought that Loulou Méridien had lost a gaiter button. But it was Lily who burst into the room. She was in cerise pyjamas, and brandished an empty bottle. She threw herself into her friend's arms and implored:

"I say, Pauloche, would you mind lending me a little port—to buck up Sigismond? . . ."

"Is he there?"

"Not yet."

"But the port does not belong to me. It belongs to his daughter."

"That does not matter—it won't go out of the family. Pour it in there."

Pauloche noticed that Lily's little bottle was a medicine bottle and that it bore a label—"Collyrium for the eyes. For external use only." So she inquired

"Do you put your port in that?"

"Don't be alarmed. He won't pour it into his eye. I have no other bottles in my place."

While Pauloche filled the bottle, she nibbled a dozen *petits fours*.

"What are you doing?"

"Bah! Just while I'm waiting!"

Pauloche protested

"But I say, Lily!"

"Don't worry! So long, old girl, I will let you have them back when you give up being an honest woman!"

Pauloche that morning had sent Maxime a pneumatic as follows

"DEAR MONSIEUR LORANDE,—I have made up my mind not to make use of the cynical letter that you dictated to me. And the reason is that I think I shall be of more help to you by not doing so. Important things are happening in my flat at 104 rue Duperré this

afternoon. It is absolutely essential for you to come and see me at five o'clock. If all goes well I shall be able to burn that letter. Anyway, I shall risk it. . . .

"Your devoted and grateful
"PAULOCHE."

This sibylline message had worried Maxime. Could Pauloche have possibly thought fit to reproach him to Denise? In a sceptical mood he mounted her eighty-eight stairs and rang the bell. Pauloche answered it without delay.

"Monsieur Lorande, I am eagerly waiting for you."

Maxime shook hands:

"I am not late?"

"No. But I was afraid the others might be before you. . . ."

"Pauloche—you are an angel. . . . I don't know how to thank you. . . ."

"Don't thank me—my little plan may go wrong. . . . One never knows."

"About the letter that I dictated to you?"

"I have it still. . . . And I hope I shall not have to make use of it. . . . Because after you left things took a new turn. Madame Lorande has fallen for Méridien. They have an appointment here this afternoon."

Maxime showed surprise and anger. He repeated

"They have an appointment here? It is amazing. It is unthinkable! Denise has fallen in love with that imbecile Merdien! Ah the worm, I could box his ears with pleasure."

Pauloche tried to calm him

'Leave his ears alone for a moment'

Fancy, Pauloche—my wife, falling for an idiot like that? Hair like a barber's assistant. A dummy in a tailor's journal. You know the suit complete, seven hundred francs—in either brown or grey. Ah! No! I am boiling! I'm boiling!"

"Turn off the gas under the kettle

You can be angry later on. Listen to me

I think I've got a good idea."

But Maxime was furious. He paced up and down calling on Pauloche to sympathize with him in his misfortune.

"No, no! She means to deceive me with this idiot—the china doll. This Don Juan for schoolgirls!"

'Listen to me a moment!'

"And this photogenic jackanapes that I had deputed to look after her, thinking that I could trust him. Only three months ago he said to me 'Maxime, I swear to you that I

will not touch a hair of your wife's head.' It is not one hair that he wants, it is the whole lot!"

"Come, try and calm yourself, Monsieur Lorande."

Maxime sat down, a little quietened.

"Yes . . . I am calm. . . . I'm listening to you, Pauloche."

"My idea was to warn you immediately the turtle doves decided to make use of my little flat."

"And you did quite right, Pauloche. . . ."

Then suddenly, his anger getting the better of him, he added:

"A little jack-ass who has the impertinence to make love to Denise. . . . He wants my boot behind him. . . . Just because you have brought me here to surprise the culpable couple it does not mean to say that I shall not speak my mind about their behaviour. . . ."

"Oh, no. . . ."

Maxime appeared nonplussed.

"What do you mean then?"

"That's not the idea at all. . . . You know what would happen if you did? . . . Your wife would be so enraged at your brutal indifference that she would persist in her mistake and your divorce would then be inevitable."

"You—you think that?"

"Yes! you'd see! You can win a woman by forcible methods—but you can only win her back to you by gentle means. The successful rogues are those who know how to make use of the whip one minute and shed tears at the next. I know what I'm talking about. They've done it to me and I've let them."

"So then, Pauloche—you have a scheme?"

"Yes, I have a little scheme. This is it. Monsieur Méridien was to arrive first at five o'clock."

"The rotter!"

"Hush! He has been. I saw him and told him. 'Monsieur, Madame Lorande has unexpectedly had to go to a dispensary in the fifteenth *arrondissement* and begs you to go and fetch her as soon as you can. And bring her back here.' The handsome Méridien has rushed off, and as it is at Vaugirard he will not be back before six o'clock."

"Well?"

"Wait—your wife will come before that. I will tell her with great secrecy that her Loulou——"

"What! What! She calls Méridien Loulou!
It's the limit! . . . I'll give him Loulou!
Ah, just you wait!"

Pauloche put her fingers to her lips.

"Keep quiet. . . . I will tell her that Monsieur Méridien is waiting for her with impatience in the sanctuary and then—she will open this door and whom will she find in the room? Why, you."

Maxime pondered for a moment, looked at Pauloche with admiration and remarked:

"Oh! . . . Very good. . . ."

"Do you begin to understand? . . . It's up to you then to know how to make the best use of the situation and win your wife back; she will be so astonished that she won't be able to defend herself. . . . Will you take it on?"

"Why, yes, I will."

"Good. Then do as I tell you. . . . Go and settle yourself in that room, and don't budge under any pretext whatever. It's not very difficult."

Maxime hesitated at the room door and knit his brows.

"It is in here that they had arranged to—
Oh! . . ."

"Get in! Get in!"

Pauloche pushed him by the shoulders.

"Into the lion's den—in you go!"

Maxime looked round and tapping his forehead said ironically:

"You ought to say: the stag's park."

The door had hardly closed when Lily ran in. She seemed very busy.

"You again!" exclaimed Pauloché

"I am sorry to bother you, dearie. Have you any cards? I can't find mine."

"What do you want to do?"

'To tell Gigi's fortune' "

"Has Monsieur Maline come?"

"Yes. We're getting along fine.

He is in the seventh heaven. He wants me to tell him whether I shall love him for a long time. You bet that the Queen of Hearts is going to give him the answer."

Pauloché took from a drawer a dirty old pack of cards which had often beguiled the weariness of her sleepless nights.

"Thanks, Pauloché," said Lily, delighted. "I will give you them back. Ah! And while I think of it, lend me some records for my gramophone as well. I must amuse the old boy. You have a 'shimmy' which will liven him up?"

Here you are. Here is the 'Danse Macabre'. Take it with the others and clear off."

Lily had already chosen some well known airs when the door opened. Monsieur Maline's head appeared, smiling, optimistic and, his voice a little cracked, croaked out

"Coo, coo!"

"Talk of a bull and you see its horns!" exclaimed Lily.

"Ha! ha! That simile hits me right away. . . . Good afternoon. How do you do, Pauloche? . . . Your friend Lily has just told me that she went and borrowed the cards from you. . . . So I want to say how do you do and at the same time ask you to be very discreet."

Pauloche reassured the old boy:

"Oh! Monsieur Maline! . . ."

"Especially with my wife, who must not know that I have been to the rue Duperré. . . . If she suspected, it would be disastrous. . . . It would be more than disastrous—it would be a terrible catastrophe—a tragedy—that would be very annoying."

"I say, Paulo," Lily remarked as she arranged the records, "do you know that Gigi has already entered me in his little pocket-book. . . . Let Pauloche see it, Gigi. . . . I come just after someone called Betty."

Monsieur Maline took the little green pocket-book from his pocket and showed it to Pauloche.

"It is quite correct. See—Lily, 91."

"That's not the size of her shoes?" asked Pauloche.

"No It is the number of stairs that *one* has to climb in order to reach the fifth floor "

Lily put her arm round the old boy's neck

"And tell Pauloche who Betty was Tell her, Gigi! "

' Betty was my nephew's governess An English girl who taught me to pronounce the th "

"How? "

"By putting the point of her tongue between my teeth

Lily hugged Monsieur Maline, and showed Pauloche how proud she was of him

' Don't you think he's funny, my Gigi? Ah, I promise you one never gets bored with him The other day he told me about the escapades of his young days Ah, la la! They knew how to amuse themselves in those days Nowadays we don't know that we're alive, we haven't any originality Tell her, Gigi, explain to Pauloche how you won the Grand Prix at the Cafe Anglais "

' I should advise you two to clear off I'm expecting a heap of people "

But Lily protested

"Only a minute, Pauloche It will make you laugh Gigi, explain to her how you won the Grand Prix on all fours! "

Monsieur Maline was not able to refuse Lily's invitation. He adjusted his monocle and began :

"This is how it happened. . . . We were having supper at the Café Anglais, le Marquis de Massa, Prince de Sagan, Lord Lauderdale, Henry Clay, myself, and some others. We each had a little friend with us—we were all a little merry. . . . All of a sudden Prince de Sagan got up and said : 'Gentlemen, let us give an imitation of a race at Longchamps. Each of us shall have his lady friend for a jockey ! . . .' Then we lined up on all fours. Let me show you. . . ."

Monsieur Maline, who was in great form, seemed anxious to entertain his two companions. He knelt down on the carpet so that he could give a proper representation of the historic race, and continued :

"I said to Diana (that was my little friend), get into the saddle. You shall see, Pauloche. Come, Lily. Hop on my back."

Lily quickly jumped astride Monsieur Maline's back. She shouted :

"You'll see, Pauloche—it's a scream !"

Monsieur Maline jiggled up and down and continued his demonstration.

"Prince de Sagan, who was standing where you are, gave the signal by popping a cham-

pagne cork Some of the fellows were on the table acting as judges Take that little table, Pauloche, and put it at the side for the paddock That's it The sofa is the weighing-room The cork pops Now we're off "

"That's right See, Lily—91 "

Lily played the part of the jockey quite seriously, she spurred her horse

"Huah! Come along, Gigi—you weren't so slow at the Cafe Anglais Hoah, my girl! Just one burst and we romp home! "

Monsieur Maline ran round the furniture A little bit winded he stopped and replied

'When I was three yards from the winning post in the last round I was alongside Henry Clay's haunches, who was being ridden by Clara Ward What did I do? I tripped Henry Clay's left arm with my leg, he stumbled and fell with his amazon Then I won the race in a canter, increasing my pace to a gallop—just like this "

Monsieur Maline increased his pace, at that moment Madame Maline appeared and was horror stricken at the sight of her husband metamorphosed into a horse

"Good heavens! "

Pauloche said nothing That little duffer Lily had left the door open, and Madame

Maline had come in without being announced. Lily was quite annoyed that someone should have come in and spoilt the fun; she dismounted from her thoroughbred, and remarked under her breath :

"Ah! I'm a winner. I'm a winner."

Monsieur Maline had got up, dusting his knees and wiping his hands. He began :

"My dear, let me explain."

But Madame Maline cut him short.

"There is nothing to explain. . . ."

He insisted, however.

"I was trying to make them understand how——"

"You were trying to make an idiot of yourself."

Pauloche interrupted :

"Madame, will you allow me to explain?"

"Pauloche, I beg you will leave me alone with Monsieur."

It was wiser to let the storm pass over. Pauloche made a sign to Lily to go out with her. Lily, however, wished to defend the winner of the Grand Prix. She explained, very politely :

"Madame—it is about the Grand Prix. . . . We only wanted to show Pauloche——"

She did no good. Madame Maline, with an imperious wave of the hand, pointed to the

door. Dragged by Pauloche, Lily deemed it more prudent to beat a retreat. Monsieur and Madame Maline were left alone. The pince-nez glared at the eyeglass.

"I assure you, Rosemonde——"

"Be silent, Caligula . . . The Roman orgies were nothing when compared with yours. Now you must needs have two women, one of them on your back."

"But no, my dear girl."

"I am no longer your dear girl!"

"If you will let me speak, my dear Rosemonde?"

"I am no longer your dear Rosemonde! I am a wife who has been outraged by her husband—a sorry figure and a debauchee.

I am quite aware of your behaviour, Sigismond . . ."

The upbraiding of his wife worried Monsieur Maline far less than her untimely appearance in the rue Duperré at the very moment when it was most inopportune. He inquired:

"But how did you know that I was coming here to finish my little chat?"

Madame Maline became enraged! Her husband's indifference was beyond all bounds.

"The end of your little chat! Oh! I surprise you on all fours on the carpet with

a young girl astride your shoulder-blades, and you call that the end of your little chat?"

"Rosemonde, you forget that Henry IV loved to run about like that, with the dauphin straddle-legs upon his august backbone. You surely know that quite well. Our good King Henri who was anxious to put the chicken in the pot. . . ."

"The chicken in the pot, but not on the back. . . . Do you want to hear how I knew about you? . . . By an anonymous letter, Monsieur. That's it. Read it yourself!"

She handed him a cream ruled piece of paper covered with disguised handwriting.

"Do you put any faith in anonymous letters?" protested Monsieur Maline.

And he read:

"A kind friend pities you. . . . If you want to dot your i's, go on Wednesday at five-fifteen to 104 rue Duperré and you will see what terrible consequences have resulted from your daughter's stupid philanthropy. . . . Signed—A delegate of the Black Hand."

Monsieur Maline laughed.

"Ha! ha! There's a black hand mixed up in it! . . . One might fancy oneself in Naples!"

"Idiot! . . . Instead of making a jest about

it you ought to blush at your behaviour
I have Come—I have seen "

'So I am like an imbecile am I?

But who has sent you this anonymous letter?"

"That does not matter, since it tells the truth! Yes or no, are you in love with this Lily?"

'Oh! What a mistake! Lily, my mistress! You may accuse me of joking with her but nothing more "

"Aren't you ashamed, at your age? To play the fool with a little minx who is just leading you on"

"I object Oh, I object Don't blame the child, it is not her fault"

"Not her fault!"

Monsieur Maline became serious He looked at his wife and solemnly declared

"She loves me She is no longer mistress of herself "

Madame Maline shrugged her shoulders
Her husband's ingenuousness overpowered her

"Sigismond! You deserve a thrashing!
You are too childish "

'Too childish Oh!"

She exclaimed

"Yes! Anyone can turn you round their little finger! "

"Little finger. . . . Oh!"

"Like a five-year-old infant!"

The noise of the quarrel increased each minute. Madame Maline had lost control of herself. Her husband's stupidity seemed so flagrant that it appeared inconceivable. The discussion was at its height when voices were heard in the tiny entrance hall. Pauloche explained things to Denise in a few words. Denise was a little thrilled at coming up to this secluded little flat where, for the first time, she was to experience the joys of an adventure. . . .

When she found her father and mother tackling each other, she pulled herself up to her full height and called out in an astonished voice :

"What's the meaning of this? . . . Mamma! . . . You here . . . what on earth is going on?"

Madame Maline turned round. She replied :

"What is happening, my child, is that . . . that . . . that you are the cause of all the trouble. . . ."

"Me!"

"Look at your father—your wretched father, irresponsible and defenceless. . . . I found him here five minutes ago with a woman on his back. . . ."

Denise thought that she had misunderstood
She repeated

"A woman on his back?"

"Yes, straddle legged Your father was
the horse "

Denise, flabbergasted, turned to her father

"Papa! Oh!"

"My dear child, allow me to explain more
fully——"

But Madame Maline interrupted him

"Let me speak, Monsieur!"

And, turning to Denise

"I received by post this morning, an anonymous letter advising me to come here and see what your father was doing I found on this landing a door ajar, and I heard his voice amidst the laughter—I came in—I found him racing upon the floor with Mademoiselle Lily on his shoulders "

"Papa!"

Monsieur Maline once more tried to get a word in

"You don't understand, Denise It was a reconstruction of the Grand Prix in 1882 "

"So, I, your mother," retorted Madame Maline, "this is what I am liable to, through your folly! To find your father with *cocottes*, in a disreputable street in Montmartre—on the fifth floor back!"

"By my folly, Mamma?"

"Naturally! It is your philanthropy that has brought us to this. . . ."

"Listen, Mamma! . . ."

"Ah! We've had enough of this, my child! Let me tell you, once and for all, these little excursions of yours into Don Quixotism begin to get on my nerves. Ah! They are all very pretty, your fanciful ideas! One might think that you had made a vow to pile up catastrophes! So long as your altruistic mania confined itself to binding up fox-terriers' tails or distributing picture books to distressed Chinese there was no harm in it. But now it is beyond the bounds of common sense, and it is my duty to say to you: Stop it!"

Denise was very much hurt at her mother's reproaches. She protested:

"But, Mother, I could not possibly foresee that . . ."

"You could not foresee that the right place for Pauloche was not under your roof? Without her, would your father have ever thought of jiggling about with Lily on his shoulders?"

Choking in her throat and almost in tears, Madame Maline continued:

"Do you think it a joke to expose your

mother to such scandals? Do you think it kind to help your father indirectly to make your mother wretched? Really! You are heartless, you ought to be ashamed of making your mother shed tears!"

"Mamma! Mamma! . I'm wretched!

I'm miserable! I never meant to upset you I swear I didn't!"

Spontaneously, Denise threw herself into her mother's arms. She was too fond of her to remain unmoved by her distress, she was filled with remorse at being the indirect cause of her misfortunes. Monsieur Maline on the right, Denise on the left, tried to soothe her. They were pouring forth affectionate exhortations, when Paulоче opened the door and made a discreet sign to Monsieur Maline, who went up to her.

"Listen to me," she whispered. "Take your wife quietly into Lily's room and console her with a glass of port. Leave me alone for a moment with your daughter."

"You really mean it, Paulоче?"

"Yes, I have my reasons."

Monsieur Maline obeyed without really understanding why. He took his wife by the arm and very gently asked her to go with him. Madame Maline acquiesced. Denise made a move to follow her mother,

but Monsieur Maline pointed to Pauloché and signalled to her to remain. Denise hesitated. Then Pauloché said:

"Madame—please stay. . . . I want to speak to you. . . . First, I want you to forgive me for the trouble I have unwittingly caused you."

Pauloché shut the door. She came back to Denise who was sitting dejectedly on the sofa. She gazed at her so sympathetically that Denise stretched out her two hands and sighed.

"Oh, my dear Pauloché, you have no reason to reproach yourself."

Pauloché sat facing her upon the old worn-out couch. She replied:

"If you had not come to rescue me at the Cassis Bar all this would not have happened. But sometimes good luck comes from bad. . . . I still believe that the sun will shine after the storm. . . ."

These words of hope affected Denise. She inquired rather shamefacedly:

"Then has he come? . . . Loulou Méridien?"

"Yes."

Denise pulled nervously at her little cream linen handkerchief.

"My God! . . . Mamma has not seen him? She has no suspicion, I hope, that I have made

an appointment with him this afternoon at your flat?"

Pauloche at once reassured her.

"No . . . She knows nothing about it. Because I took good care to shut him in that room, where he is waiting for you."

Denise trembled. She turned her head towards the closed door and murmured:

"Méri dien is there?"

"Yes. He is waiting for you feverishly."

"Ah! You have worked it very well for my mother not to meet him. . . . Pauloche—I thank you."

"I thought that you would not want anyone to know . . ."

"How foolish I am! Ah! No! . . . Pauloche, I—I—feel very wretched. . . . I am doing a silly thing . . . I am playing ducks and drakes with my reputation. . . . Ah! It is a pretty lovers' meeting! . . . I shall never forget my first five to seven appointment."

There was a dead silence pregnant with unspoken confessions. Pauloche bent over towards Denise.

"You are eager to spend two hours *tête-à-tête*?"

"Are you joking? . . ."

Denise got up nervously.

"Ah! Well, I am annoyed with myself for having accepted his invitation. I let myself fall for him. I was silly!"

Pauloche watched her closely. With a woman's intuition she realized the thoughts which obsessed Denise. She knew by instinct what she ought to say.

"Of course it is not the same for him as for you. . . . If you had seen him just now! . . . like a young cock who comes into the farmyard—a stallion that neighs at the door of the mare's box. . . ."

Denise turned round sharply.

"What! What do you say?"

"The truth. He has anticipated everything—the place where you will yield—this cushion—the way you will lead him into the room—this way. . . ."

Denise stepped back incredulous.

"What are you saying? . . . That I—should lead him into the room?"

"Yes, yes. He is quite confident of everything, is your Loulou. He knows how to manage things. . . . No woman can resist him. . . ."

"Ah! So no woman can resist him? Oh, really?"

"He has rehearsed the scene."

"What scene?"

"Yours He was here He spoke in a falsetto voice in order to imitate yours 'Ah! Loulou—I can no longer resist you There is something about you, I don't know what it is, that overpowers me altogether!'"

Denise leapt up suddenly, just as Paulоче had expected She exclaimed sarcastically

"He has said that, has he? Ah! There is a something about him, I don't know what, that overpowers me altogether Oh, well, we'll see about that Ah! I can no longer resist him It is too much! The blackguard! The little upstart! Paulоче, would you believe me if I swore to you that I wish my husband had heard that remark so that he could give him the punishment he deserves!"

Paulоче then got up

"Upon my word he ought not to get off scot free Between you and me I was a little sorry for you"

"Me! To lead this imbecile into my room? Oh! Oh! Paulоче, you shall see how I will lead him into your room Don't move!"

She ran to the closed door, opened it suddenly, and with a voice which was anything but loving she called out

"Monsieur Méridien!"

Nobody answered.

Denise was surprised, she looked at Pauloche. She made an evasive gesture and suggested in a low tone:

"Perhaps he has already gone to bed?"

That was too much. Denise, annoyed, exasperated, gave vent to an exclamation of impatience and called afresh:

"Are you there, Méridien?"

Maxime appeared, his arms stretched out in front of him, his face calm and smiling, his expression gentle. Denise shrank back stupefied. Maxime took a couple of steps forward. His arms enfolded Denise's shoulders, who was so wrought up that she burst into a flood of tears. But they were tears of joy. Then Pauloche, satisfied with what she had accomplished, stole out on the tips of her toes.

Maxime held Denise tightly in his arms. He softly stroked her hair which touched his cheek. He whispered:

"Cry, my darling—cry—that will do you good."

"Maxime!"

"Denise. Let me dry your tears with my repentance. Ah, Denise, I admit that I have

been foolish that I have unconsciously
spoilt the most beautiful thing in the world
Our love is a marvellous jewel that I held in
my hands, I let it slip away like a man who
does not know the value of his treasure
I beg you to forget the stupidity of a poor boy
who has often wept at the gate of your
'Paradise Lost' "

Denise listened without hearing She was
merely a child who wanted to be petted

"Say it again, Maxime "

"Listen darling The two little dramas
that we have passed through which you are
responsible for, prove to you that philanthropy
is a dangerous business When a woman
is too fond of humanity at large she will end
up either in a nunnery or more likely she will
find herself in hospital "

Denise sorrowfully bent her head

"My lost illusions, Maxime! "

"Shall I restore them or will Destiny, which
is stronger than either of us? Do you hear
her voice which says 'My child, you can no
longer be a Madame Don Quixote, because
before you help the unfortunates in the world,
I have another task for you I am Destiny,
your friend, I invite you to offer your sympathy
to a man who is suffering and who can only be
cured by you—open once more your heart,

stretch out your two arms to him; that will be the most gracious gesture you have ever made.' ”

Denise raised her sparkling eyes. They were eager to believe it.

“Maxime. . . . Are you speaking the truth? ”

“Yes! Yes! Believe me! There is only one way to forget your unfortunate little excursion to ‘Windmill’ land. . . . You have broken all your lances. . . . Now Rosinante has honestly gained her repose, and your heart, slightly wounded, needs true love to heal it. I offer you mine.”

A very long kiss sealed this reconciliation. Suddenly Denise, again at her ease, began to laugh. She admitted :

“And to think that I expected to find Méridien here! ”

“Leave your Méridien in the Antipodes where Pauloche has dispatched him.”

“What do you say? ”

“I say that she is responsible for our reconciliation. It is she who persuaded me to come here, and who a little time ago sent Méridien to look for you at the dispensary in the fifteenth *arrondissement*.”

“No, really! It is Pauloche. . . .”

“The artificer of our happiness. Absolutely.”

"Then—Maxime my philanthropy has done some good!"

'Yes But like witticisms, the shorter the philanthropy the better "

Their second embrace was interrupted by Pauloche, who apologized

"Oh! I have chosen the wrong moment "

Maxime reassured her

On the contrary, Pauloche, you have chosen the right one You witness the successful result of your own work Do you see?"

"Thank you, Pauloche," said Denise

"Thank you for the dispensary of the fifteenth *arrondissement*

Pauloche was astonished

"What? You mean that you are not going to get divorced?"

"Look," said Maxime, taking a paper from his pocket "These are the divorce papers that have been served on me "

"For what?"

"For an attempt at conciliation Do you see what I am going to do with them?"

He was just going to tear them up But Denise stopped him

"No! Let me "

She took a pen and wrote across the official document

"Thank you, judge, it is already done."

Then she added, laughing:

"We will send it to him to-morrow morning."

In their happiness they both embraced their dear Pauloche and swore eternal friendship to her. Perfect happiness reigned in the fifth floor flat at No. 104 rue Duperré. Saint Francis of Assisi himself would have approved of the conduct of the pretty reformed little girl who had just cleansed her past life in the pure source of a kind action. All of a sudden someone crept into the "boudoir" of unalloyed felicity. It was Lily. She made a face; with her hands in the pockets of her pyjamas, she gazed at the contented trio and half seriously, half comically she announced:

"Say now, you lot—I may tell you that Sigismond has gone off with his old woman—so in all this business, I am the mug!"